

2001 - Complete

GODS
DEVILS
AND
WILDERNESS PEDESTRIANS

Harvey Manning

work (L. S. ...)

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GODS, DEVILS, AND WILDERNESS PEDESTRIANS

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TENDER GRASS AND COLD PANCAKES

My copy of The Illustrated Bible Story Book: New Testament, "Stories Retold for Little Children," is inscribed on the fly leaf, "To Sunny Boy Manning from his Grandmother Hawthorne Xmas 1928." I recall her vividly, and not through memories of memories, or memories of family anecdotes, but the real thing. She was a giantess of a woman, so enormously tall that when the two of us went for a walk in the neighborhood her purse, draped from her arm, hung at my nose level, reeking of Juicy Fruit gum. Whenever I think of Grandmother my mouth waters.

Precociously early I began plundering Dad's treasure trove of childhood books -- Tom Swift and His Flying Machine (Submarine), Dave Porter at Yale (in Europe), The Boy Scouts at the North Pole (South Pole), and dozens more. I tried very hard to read Grandmother's gift for my third Christmas, her last. On the brink of Heaven she had taken thought to help me someday join her, to chew Juicy Fruit forever. Sadly, the stories retold by Seymour Loveland were for children littler than I ever was, and George Herbert rendered the twenty-third psalm in such verses as:

He leads me to the tender grass
Where I both feed and rest;
Then to the streams that gently pass:
In both I have the best.

The floridly colorful pictures by Milo Winter held my attention, though. Studied intently up to my ninth or tenth Christmas, they conveyed most of what I managed to learn about Christianity in those years.

It was, in a word, foreign. The climate was hot and dry -- no forests and no rain, much sand and many palm trees and camels. Yet the people wore heavy robes and turbans, cumbersome and doubtless sweaty. Their faces were familiar enough, the features and complexions North European, like ours. But nobody in our family would take off a friend's shoes at a party and wash his feet, or sneak up behind him at the dinner table and pour oil on his head. These people drank purple wine at every meal. Our family never touched the stuff. The principal food appeared to be cold pancakes. In none of the pictures could I find any syrup.

Nevertheless, the book came from Grandmother and had to be heeded. I promised her memory to have nothing to do with the sort of men in the pictures captioned, "In the crowd were Scribes and Pharisees," and "Money Changers in the Courts of the Temple." I shuddered at "wicked King Herod" garbed in robes as red as the fires of Hell.

Not only was Herod's wickedness hateful, but his fate was devoutly to be avoided. Care had been exercised on my behalf. Slipped between pages of Grandmother's book, a certificate attests that on December 19, 1926, I was "enrolled a member of the Cradle Roll Department of the Asbury Methodist School of Seattle." Over the years I attended Sunday School in Methodist churches from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic and back again.

Grandmother would have been distressed to learn that for all this I never developed the proper feelings for Jesus. She would have been devastated to learn it was her book's fault. I admired His manly looks on the way to Golgotha,

bent double under the Cross, and when "Out of His Father's house Jesus drove all the traders and moneychangers." For the rest, though, He was too "meek and mild" for my taste. If He had to ride a donkey (His companions, including the women and children, were walking) did it have to be side-saddle?

In striking contrast was "the man who lived in the wilderness." Loveland said "He wore queer clothes," but in fact they were the only sensible, comfortable ones in the book. "His long hair fell over his shoulders and often blew in his eyes." Among the favorite family anecdotes were my visits to the barbers, for whom I'd conceived a violent dislike well before my third Christmas, largely because they poured oil on a person's head. There surely was nothing meek or mild in the handsome, vigorous man striding purposefully along a country road: "John the Baptist returning to the wilderness where he could be alone with God."

THE PURPLE SPOT

Being a month and three days the older would, by itself, have made cousin Patsy my acknowledged leader. More important, though, was her talent. The year she lived with us I got more spankings than ~~anybody~~ all the years before and after.

I'd never have dreamt of raiding the bridge mix. She was the one who ^{discovered} determined that while the grown-ups were at the card table in the dining room we could sneak in the kitchen on hands and knees and high-grade the candy bag for the licorise.

Eating the candy was the least of the sport; we'd get our share next morning anyhow. The fun was the stealing. Better than that was crawling from bed without permission and staying up illegally late, eavesdropping on conversations not meant for six-year-old ears. The absolute best part was the ^{radio} weekly serial, a mystery thriller scheduled for an hour when the likes of us were supposed to be safely asleep. The adults half-listened while playing. Patsy and I didn't miss a word or a scream, lying on the kitchen floor sucking licorice. Each episode concluded with one of the characters turning up missing, nothing left where he or she was last seen except (the orchestra rising to a frenzy, everybody shrieking) "THE PURPLE SPOT!" We'd scuttle back to our room and jump in bed together and hug until the shivering stopped.

That was a joyous year, two only children, always close and now become twins, sharing everything -- the conspiracy against adults, the spankings, the bridge mix, the chicken pox and measles, and THE PURPLE SPOT.

Several years and several houses later in our family travels, returned to my status as an only child, I was haunted by an afternoon serial featuring a diabolical invention. I never was clear what the program was about because it ran during my wood-chopping and chicken-feeding. Now and then, though, while dumping an armload in the wood box on the back porch, I'd hear shouting and screaming in the house and somebody hollering, "THE PURPLE RAY!" It made an electrical crackling and hissing which followed me out into the winter night, to the dark woodpile and chicken house.

For months, one year, the Hit Parade was dominated by "When the DEEP PURPLE Falls Over Sleepy Garden Walls." Half a dozen times an evening it came on the radio as the night deepened outside the living room windows, falling over the woodpile and the vegetable garden and the chicken house. Often it was playing when I went to bed, alone, Patsy years and miles distant. Sinking into sleep I'd see a jellyfish slime oozing from the chicken house, through the garden, over the lawn and around the house, electrically crackling and hissing, and I'd sit straight up in bed and turn on the light and inspect the floor for THE PURPLE SPOT.

At school we pledged allegiance to the flag and sang "Oh Say Can You See," and "My Country Tis of Thee," and "Columbia the Gem of the Ocean," and

Oh beautiful for spacious skies
And amber waves of grain,
For PURPLE mountains' majesty,
Above the fruited plain.

In mind's eye I saw "fruited plain" as an enormous, ~~flat~~ flatness
a sickly-sweetness of
covered with rotten apples and bananas swarming with fruit flies. Looming

above the corruption and ~~smelling just as bad~~ were the PURPLE horrors.

The night our Scout bunch spent at Camp Mystery I hiked alone to Marmot Pass for the sunset. I was happy to be many miles from the nearest fruited plain, and mighty^{il} relieved when the mountains turned ^{many} ~~any~~ color^f ~~any~~ but not PURPLE.

KING KONG

Half the children of America were awaking at night screaming with nightmares about the gigantic ape, so my folks wouldn't take me to King Kong. They'd have done better to do so, to let me see the beast in person and learn he was basically gentle, and at worst nowhere near ^{as} ~~so~~ frightening as the posters on theater walls which repeatedly awoke our house.

The other half of the children of America were screaming with nightmares about Frankenstein, so I also didn't see that. Oddly, though, presumably due to a faith in the ^{taming influence} ~~power~~ of femininity, my folks took me to the masterpiece of the series, The Bride of Frankenstein, and I didn't close my eyes for a month.

Our house lay a minute's walk from the edge of the forest, the start of the trail to school and church, a half-mile of dark woods infested by Kong, Boris Karloff, and the worst of the lot, the terrified and terrifying face of Elsa Lanchester, freshly jolted from death to life by the lightning bolt.

THE MONK

Bandages were still wrapped around my head when we returned West, ether fumes lingered in my blood, and at ^{every} nightfall I began hearing, again, the whimperings and moanings of the children's ward of Lowell General Hospital. There, dozens of us, boys and girls from baby age to eight or nine years old, suffered the interminable hours of darkness with no solace except the night nurse. If ~~you~~ ^{a kid} had the strength to press the button long enough, she'd come, sooner or later. ^{But} ~~when~~ she ~~didn't~~ might be the mean one who'd cuss ~~you~~ ^{the kid} out if ~~you'd~~ ^{he'd} thrown up or otherwise dirtied ~~your~~ ^{his} sheets and ~~toss~~ ^{toss him} around like a bundle of rags, ~~while she changed them.~~ There was a three-year-old who cried without a pause, "Wa-wa, wa-wa." I couldn't sleep, pushed the button, and the nurse cussed me and didn't give the poor kid a drink. A corner of the ward was screened off. ^{Every} ~~In the~~ morning one or two of the kids behind the screen were wheeled out of the ward, ^{for a second or third} ~~on a return~~ trip to the operating room, or to somewhere else, not to ~~return~~ return to the ward. Few of us ever had spent a night apart from parents; now we'd been abandoned by them, by the entire world of adults, to live if we could, or not.

One night in our new home in the West, a tumbledown shack loaned by a friend of Uncle Bill's, I awoke to see a dark figure standing over me, the face shadowed to a vacancy by a monk's cowl. My shriek brought Mother. I spent the rest of the night in the folks' bed.

Many a subsequent evening as the darkness thickened I watched certain geometries of the room's furniture compose themselves into the Monk. I saw him grow larger and float toward me, a faceless blackness. Many a night the folks patiently accepted me in their bed.

With the easing of the Depression we were able to build our own house, a real one. I loved my room, snugly small yet with plenty of space for desk and books and model ships and paraphernalia. But I never could have slept in it without Jeff curled up on my feet, next best thing to a sister. His subconscious routinely monitored sounds from the square miles of his empire. Most he ignored as insignificant. A few rated a "woof." Only two brought him wide awake.

One was the bark of a ^{certain} mortal enemy. Let this voice join the hundreds in the country chorus near and far and Jeff ^{leaped} ~~leapt~~ from my feet and raged at the door until I let him out. His defense of our perimeter and challenges to all points of the compass lulled me back to sleep, to be awakened later by his scratching at the door.

As for the other sound -- or whatever it was -- his response woke me straight up, and in an instant more, ^{the} ~~my~~ folks too. I'd hear the growl in the back of his throat, reach down and feel the ^{hair} bristling on his nape, and follow his eyes into the darkness. I never saw what he saw but his word was good enough. I hated to leave Jeff to face it alone but dogs weren't allowed in the folks' bed.

THE LADDER TO HEAVEN

The only person in Heaven I knew was Grandmother, but I also looked forward to meeting Grandfather Hawthorne, who had died several months before my birth, ~~and~~ to reunions with Tramp and Lucky and a couple of cats. Even without these incentives, though, a person would be crazy to risk the alternative. I went to church.

The worst part was wearing Sunday clothes. Walking the half-mile through the woods (keeping an eye out for King Kong and Boris Karloff and Elsa Lanchester) I envied John the Baptist's free and easy garb as he went off to be with God. Further, he went to be alone with God, not to mumble hymns with a bunch of people I never saw any other day of the week, then sit in Sunday School with kids of whom not one was a friend of mine and look at the same sort of pictures as in my Illustrated Bible Story Book.

The best part was knowing it wouldn't last forever. Mother came of a good Methodist family and had been alto soloist in the choir. Dad's folks had been formally and properly introduced at the Yellow Meeting House, a famous Congregational church; later they became Methodist stalwarts, Grandfather Manning a member of the choir and the Building Committee; the year we lived with them in Lowell we attended their services. But that was the last time my folks went to church, and though on our return West they made me go, plainly it wasn't a life sentence. A brief spell in childhood and youth apparently was enough to set a person safely on course.

In my case, maybe not. I failed utterly to achieve spiritual kinship with the minister and his wife, sweet and gentle souls, kind and loving, or the Sunday

School teachers, so meek and mild. Church, alone, might not get the job done. At the age of nine, therefore, I determined to read the Bible. Each day I turned a certain number of pages, faithfully pronouncing every word. When my mind wandered and I realized the words hadn't been getting into my head, I'd start over. When after weeks I realized I'd lost track of who had begat whom, I went back to the beginning. If only I could turn enough hallowed pages, pronounce enough archaic words, commit enough sacred history to memory, Christian holiness surely would suffuse my bones and soul and guarantee me a seat beside Grandmother and Grandfather, Tramp and Lucky and the cats.

Had the plan worked, logically it would have suffused me with Judaic holiness, because I never got within a country mile of the New Testament. I gave up for several reasons. First, the Bible was such a bore it made Sunday School seem like a carnival. Second, the Holy Land was so different from Puget Sound, or even Massachusetts, I couldn't think God meant us to behave as people did so far away, so long ago. Finally, the way these foreigners carried on, drinking wine and "laying together," was a scandal.

I privately decided that to be a Christian one had to revere the Bible but not necessarily read it, and ^{had} to go to church until his folks said he'd had enough.

Still, that didn't seem really sufficientⁱ to cope with the problems of sin and evil and Hell. I worried that my folks, out of ignorance, might have set me on the wrong track. What was a "Methodist"? Was it better or worse than a "Baptist"? Why had Dad's folks switched from "Congregational"? There were such a lot of Protestants. Maybe every brand was acceptable to God, and maybe not. Maybe none was.

Mother always laughed telling how her bunch, walking to school, would cross paths with a bunch headed for a different school, and jeer "Cat-lickers! Cat-lickers!" They'd be answered, "Pup-lickers! Pup-lickers!" The Lowell Mannings were deeply Orange and the main entertainment at gatherings was telling the newest priest jokes, nun jokes, and priest-nun jokes. I was shocked to hear grown-ups telling dirty stories until I understood these were part of our religion.

Astonishingly, Uncle Dave married a shanty Irish girl. They got along very well, for all his being the best ~~themselves~~ ^{in the family} at really dirty religious jokes. Aunt Von just laughed and went right ^{on} ~~along~~ raising their kids, my cousins, in the Church.

Aunt Von was as nice as my Protestant aunts. However, I held her in some awe. Scanty as was my knowledge of Protestant Christianity, I knew next to nothing about the Catholic. The most dangerous moment of my life in Lowell was not in Lowell General Hospital or Sycamore Street Primary School but in a theater during the newsreel. A procession of old Italian men in fancy costume was moving slowly down a street. The darkness of the theater, which moments earlier had been a general hiss of whispered Italian, French, Polish, and golly knows, abruptly hushed. Through the reverent quiet came the shrill piping of a seven-year-old "talking United States," and in a foreign (Seattle) accent, asking, "Mother, what's a Pope?"

THE COAL CHUTE TO HELL

Among the matters never brought up in Sunday School was why we had three Gods. As far as I got in the Bible there was just One, which seemed plenty. Being all-powerful, He obviously could do as he pleased about anybody, anything, anywhere, any time. Definitely He had to be honored and obeyed and above all not angered. What/^{role}was left for the other Two?

Even the One was not of immediate concern in daily life. He was very far away, a super-great-great-great-grandfather. For practical purposes a person was in the charge of parents, assisted by grandparents and aunts and uncles. God was to be feared because if your family threw up their hands in despair and turned you over to Him, He might throw up His hands and pass you on to the Devil.

I was introduced to Hell at the Arabian Theater, close enough to home that Patsy and I were allowed to walk there by ourselves for the Saturday ~~matinee~~ matinee, including feature movie, serial episode, cartoons, short subjects, and stage show. One Saturday the theater walls were plastered with posters of the movie that was playing at night, not for kids. In lurid color, damned souls writhed in flames, stark naked. I was so scared I couldn't laugh at the cartoons, hardly could eat my candy. Decades afterward I nerved myself to stay up for the late late show on television and found Dante's Inferno was dreadful only in its suffocating dullness. The writhings in the film were purely psychological. Nothing was on fire ~~in the picture~~ except cigarettes. Irrelevant to the movie, the posters nevertheless contributed to my

religious education as significantly as the Illustrated Bible Book.

With two sets of parents buying toys for their only two children, our basement was renowned in the neighborhood. Kids came from blocks around to play with us. I never gave a thought, then, to the furnace, though peering inside, one could fancy naked little souls writhing in the lumps of flaming coal.

What sins would send a person to Hell? Patsy and I were caught for most of ours on the spot, and spanked, and that took care of that. None of those for which we didn't get caught, stealing bridge mix and the like, rated the furnace. Anyhow, what went on in the house was the folks' business, not God's.

Outside the house was where the danger lay. There, a person couldn't count on getting off with ~~that~~ a spanking. Moreover, the folks could be outwitted if you had a sister-cousin like Patsy, but there was no hiding from God. Twice in early weeks of the first grade I had terrible accidents. God could have forgiven me for ~~that~~ ^{those}. The sin was in failing to hold up my hand when the teacher asked who did it. The punishment ~~for that~~ was stored up for me, sure to be dealt out someday.

We moved East, without Patsy, and I never saw that house -- that basement and furnace -- again. Not awake. Then in the hospital the grown-ups/in ^{all} white strapped me to the table and pressed a metal cone over my face until the ether killed me.

I awoke in the children's ward, amid the whimpering and the moaning, ~~that~~ ~~that~~ I fell asleep at last -- and awoke in the basement -- alone, because Patsy didn't live with us anymore. The furnace was roaring.

I started up the stairs to the kitchen. My legs were lead. The furnace door flew open and out jumped the Devil, red horns and red tail and red grin.

I was never going to make it up the stairs. By the time some ^{kid} pushed the button and the night ^{nurse} arrived I was all through screaming, was lying in the dark whimpering and moaning with the rest of the damned souls.

HUCKLEBERRY

Half my world was city. The better half was "Huckleberry." It wasn't so much a place -- there were other great spots ^{in the mountains,} though this was our favorite -- as a way of family life. Only Dad and the uncles actually saw Huckleberry Creek because it flowed into the far side of the White River, ^{which was} much too deep and swift and wide, roaring ~~down~~ ^{down} from Mount Rainier's glaciers, for anybody but a grown man to wade. Our side of the river had a creek just as good for me and the cousins, all clear pools and cold ripples that made our bare feet tingle. We gathered pretty pebbles to take home and ordinary ones to throw at chipmunks. Not that we ever hit one. We ~~just~~ ^{only} wanted to chase them up the trees.

Everything about Huckleberry was wonderful. Getting ready to leave Seattle was a circus in itself, dressing in mountain clothes and putting on boots, loading camp gear and food in the trunks and on the fenders and running boards and back seats of two or three cars. At Enumclaw we left the last houses behind, the last cows, the last paved road. The road got narrower and rougher and more lonesome, tunneling into virgin forest. At a grown-over lane we turned off toward the river to our private camp where nobody else ever stayed. The wall tent was pitched, the bedrolls spread, the fire ^{ring} ~~place~~ rocks arranged ~~in shape~~ for cooking, and everybody took off to have their own fun. At supper we ^{Cousins} stuffed ourselves with the trout that Dad and Uncle Bill and Uncle Mort caught ^{in Huckleberry Creek} and Mother and Aunt Grace and Aunt Ruth fried in ~~the same~~ ^{cornmeal.} At breakfast we stuffed ourselves with hotcakes and bacon and eggs and leftover trout.

The days were so much fun we got up at first light to ~~make~~^{make} a running start. The nights were even better, the grown-ups sitting around drinking coffee and talking about fish, us kids toasting marshmallows and playing with fire sticks. We were the only people in the world. The only sounds in the world ~~came~~^{were} from us and the river and the owls. The only light was from our fire and the stars.

We'd roll up in blankets and sleep on the ground, Bruce and Patsy and me together. In good weather the folks let us sleep outside the tent, looking up and up the trees that rose so high in the night, toward the stars that were so much higher they were spooky to think about.

There was nothing to be afraid of, though, with cousins as close as twin sister and big brother. No naked souls writhed in the campfire. There was no sin, no Devil, and with two grown-ups per^{kid}, no particular need for God. Nobody had nightmares at Muckleberry.

ANGELS AND DEMONS

Up in the sky somewhere was Heaven, and way deep underground was Hell, and everybody in the world was headed one place or the other. It was easy enough, looking around, to figure who was going where, the good kids and the rotten kids.

The best kid in our family was cousin Bruce, three years older than Patsy and me. Weekend mornings she and I would lie late in bed -- her bed, because it had a window on the street, so we could simultaneously keep track of what was happening in the neighborhood -- and tell our dreams. Mine were silly and short. Hers were exciting stories that went on and on. The three of us would be walking in the forest at Huckleberry and animals would jump out at us, one after another, and ~~growl~~^{growl} and howl, and Bruce would chase them away.

At Daniel Bagley ~~Elementary~~^{Elementary} School, where we entered the first grade, ~~together,~~ a Schoolboy Patrolman held out his flag, morning and afternoon, for us to cross Aurora Avenue. One day Patsy talked him into coming to see our famous basement. The neighborhood kids couldn't believe we had such a guest, a sixth-grader as tall as a grown-up.

There was a rotten kid at Daniel Bagley. He caught me having an accident in the lunchroom and threatened to tell the teacher unless I gave him money. I'd spent my lunch money, which Mother knotted up in a corner of my handkerchief before I left home. He took the two pennies I was saving for candy. After that, whenever I looked around the schoolyard at recess, there he'd be, a big ugly third-grader with fat lips from eating other people's candy. I'd have liked to kill him. God knew that. The rotten kid was going to Hell, and

I was glad. But he might take me with him.

When we moved East I thought I was already there. In Seattle I talked like everyone else. In Lowell I had a foreign accent. Worse, not for years had any boy in Seattle worn knee pants. In Lowell the boys had to wear them until they were the next thing to grown men. Dad explained this to Mother but she stuck out her lower lip and said she didn't raise her boy to be a sissy. Every day of my life I was jeered at, "Go home and take off your father's pants!"

In Seattle, being so different would have got me shoved around but not badly hurt because that would get somebody in serious trouble. In Lowell, every little kid you met on the streets would punch you in the guts so hard you couldn't breathe, and if you didn't fall down from that might ~~sock~~ ^{sock} you in the nose. ~~on the nose~~ When I came home punched and socked, Mother would want to call the police but Dad would look ashamed. He, also, hadn't raised his boy to be a sissy. So I learned to punch kids in the guts and sock them in the nose -- those littler than me, anyhow.

Too few were. I wouldn't have lasted even my half a year at Sycamore Street Primary School had it not been for my Protector. His father was wealthy and could have afforded the best private school, ^{but} ~~he~~ wanted his son to start where he had, at the bottom. Sycamore Street was that. He did take the precaution of having his son trained by a professional prizefighter. I never saw my Protector put up his dukes. He ^d ~~di~~n't have to. A look was enough. Under his eye in the schoolyard I was as safe as at home. Unfortunately, he didn't live nearby and was dropped off and picked up by a chauffeured limousine.

In the morning I could dodge to school by this alley and that. In the afternoon the schoolyard exits were blockaded by the rotten pals of my Tormentor, who once had ^{challenged} ~~taken on~~ my Protector, been ^{given} ~~taught~~ a boxing lesson, and now was revenging himself on me. He never broke anything or made me bleed very much because that would have got him another boxing lesson. However, I was always sore and aching from his punching, the sort ~~aching~~ you couldn't tell anybody about without being thought a crybaby.

He got meaner and meaner, putting on a show for his gang. One twilight he threw me off the sidewalk into a frozen pond and as I tried to crawl up the snowbank kept shoving me back through the hole in the ice. I had a cold already and this made it worse, soon landing me in the hospital but also, in my last days at Sycamore Street, leading to a final showdown.

At the end of ~~lunch-hour and~~ recess a first bell rang, signaling the classes to form lines on the flight of steps below the school doors. At a second bell the teachers, at the tops of their individual lines, turned and led their classes through the doors. Good kids and smart kids responded alertly to the first bell, to be near the top of the line. The end of the line, on the bottom steps, was for the bad and the careless -- or in my case, the feverish and half-delirious.

I heard the whoop of glee as Tormentor spotted me at the very bottom of the line. I listened to his thud-thud-thud across the schoolyard, building up momentum, and his stamp-stamp-stamp up the steps, precisely timed so that exactly as the teacher turned away he'd break my back. Precisely timed, I whirled in a roundhouse swing and smashed my fist in his face. I remember ~~his~~ ^{his} look of surprise and horror ~~on his face~~ as he toppled backward down the steps to the ground. He lay still as a stone while his soul, I prayed, sped

directly to Hell. Whether or not, he vanished from my life -- as did, in several days, everyone at Sycamore Street except my Protector, whose mother brought him to visit me in the children's ward.

The teachers at the top of the steps pretended not to see me commit first-degree murder. They turned quickly to go inside so they wouldn't have to render first aid and maybe save the rotten kid's life. ~~God witnessed the entire episode. If I had to go to hell for it, well, that would give me~~ ^{about some things} ~~lots more chances to~~ ~~get even for the~~ ~~a~~ ~~per~~ ~~just~~ ~~the~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~time~~.

THE PATTERN OF LITTLE FEET

I'd no more have been given permission to read Sax Rohmer than I'd been allowed to see King Kong. However, flipping through the Saturday Evening Post for the cartoons, there was no escaping Dr. Fu Manchu. In later years, villain of a weekly radio program, Dr. Fu became a figure of fun. At lunch at Lincoln¹ High we'd do his theme song, a dozen of us together, pounding fists on the table and snapping fingers in the air (drum, drum-drum-drum, snap-snap; drum, drum-drum-drum, snap-snap) until the teacher on monitor duty asked us to cut it out. Another Rohmer villain, however, ^{long remained} ~~is~~ as sinister as ever.

In the first instalment of the serial in which he was the evil star, a high official of the British Secret Service is discovered dead in his "safe room," throat cut. The hero, assigned to investigate, establishes that the official was alone and the anteroom was occupied by his absolutely trustworthy staff. The safe room had no windows, only the single door, and no other opening except a ventilator shaft ^{barely} ~~no more than~~ a foot square. The official had entered the room with a box, a foot square and three feet long, newly arrived in the post, marked for his eyes only. The box was found beside the body, open and empty, no contents anywhere about. This was curious. The secretary remembered the box had been quite weighty.

In the second instalment a second secret service official comes to an identical end. A third instalment, a third. A fourth. The British Empire is strewn with slit throats and empty boxes in safe rooms from London to -- aha! -- Baghdad. The hero has a notion what he's up against.

In early turmoils of the Muslim religion a group of Ismaeli sectarians adopted the strategy of murdering opponents, preparing for the act by intoxicating themselves with hemp, or hashish. Thus the Arab word, hashshashin, "hashish eater." Medieval Latin made it assassinus; a number of prominent Crusaders were stabbed by agents of the dread sheik, the Old Man of the Mountains.

In the next-to-last instalment the hero penetrates the lair of the incumbent Old Man, who, in the way villains have, is delighted to ^{explain} ~~describe~~ his plan for toppling the Empire, starting with the Secret Service. What he does is kidnap infant boys and raise them to manhood on hashish, which makes them utter slaves of his will and so stunts their growth they fit handily in a box a foot square and three feet long, ^{within} ~~well-with~~ the size and weight limits of the Postal Service. The official takes the "eyes only" package into his safe room, opens it, a hashish fiend leaps out and cuts his throat and escapes through the ventilator shaft.

The hero dodges out of the lair and at instalment's end is dashing full tilt down a country road in the Near East night. Hard on his heels is the Old Man's entire stable of little hashish fiends, waving knives. For a week, until the next Post, I was left hanging there -- running there -- on the road, in the night.

Dr. Fu lost his power over me largely because he operated in the mysterious depths of distant cities I made mental note to ^{avoid.} ~~stay away from.~~ But the Old Man ~~of the Mountains~~ was "of the mountains" and so was our family, and his lair was in the country where the roads at night were dark and empty, and so was our house.

Kept after school by basketball practice or some other event, I'd somberly ^{watch} ~~look~~ the darkening beyond the windows and nerve myself up for the chase. The rules were rigid. First, they never ran as fast as they could, always hung back a dozen feet, speeding up when I did, slowing when I did. Second, they pretended not to be there, stopped short when I did, no footfalls for me to hear, and when I cast a quick look over my shoulder, quicker than my eye they dove in the bushes.

Their plan was to let me get all the way up on the porch and then, as I was turning the door knob, jump on my back in a bunch. While rounding the corner from the road into our yard I'd summon my reserves for a sprint and start hollering, "MOTHER! MOTHER!" She'd open the door and I'd dive in the house and the hashish fiends would dive in the shrubbery. They didn't care. They knew there'd be another night.

THE SECOND TIME

Nothing was wrong with me this time except too many colds, ~~the year~~
~~before~~. The operation was a quick and simple yanking of the tonsils and adenoids. An eleven-and-a-half-year-old wasn't going to be a baby about that, especially since these people were so nice, not the least ^{like} the masked assassins in Lowell. I lay quietly on my back, inhaled deeply, and sank through layers of gray clouds, soft and silent, really very pleasant, until they wrapped around me in a tight cylinder and began to rotate, ^{at first} slowly, then rapidly, then faster. I'd been tricked. I wrenched free, broke through the gray wall -- into a second cylinder rotating so fast it roared as loud as a hurricane, the walls yellow and red and PURPLE. They'd done it again.

The new death brought a new nightmare. I was yelling my head off, sprinting for the door, but knew Mother never could open it in time to save me from -- from what? Not the Devil -- he and the basement and the furnace were gone from my dreams forever. Not the hashish fiends -- they had the decency to stay out of my sleep. Who?

The novel horror was that this nightmare ^{didn't quit} ~~did not stop~~ when I awoke. We fell into a routine. Mother would hear my screaming and come running with the deck of cards. We'd sit in the living room, every light turned on, and play casino. At the start I wouldn't be able to focus on the game, not with the black pressure on the windows -- on the walls and roof -- ^{only} prevented from collapsing the house ~~by~~ by Mother and the lights. Eventually the weight would ease off, I'd get involved in picking up cards and spades and aces,

Little and Big Casino. It was my favorite game, next to the cutthroat pinochle the three of us played every Saturday night. After a while, adding up the score, I'd notice nothing was outside the windows but plain night. I could go back to bed -- my own bed, ~~the~~ ^{having} outgrown that of my folks -- leaving the lights on, of course.

Old nightmare and new, both had commenced after I'd been killed. In each case, however, the Pursuer was worse than mere death. The Devil was ^{that} surely. ~~The~~ The New One wasn't physically specific, was faceless as the Monk -- more than that, was bodiless as the wind. Who? God had all the power He cared to use, yet surely never could be so violent, angry, unforgiving, relentless, remorseless, merciless, pitiless. Above everything, God was good.

The earlier pursuit might be accounted for by the accidents and the murder and a host of similar little things. This one, I suspected, had to do with girls. ~~I~~ ^{next to} I'd had ^{girls} nothing to do with any, except cousins, as cousins. However, some of the old woods roads that served as trails through the woods were ^{visited} ~~driven~~ by cars Saturday nights, and Sunday afternoons I couldn't help seeing the things that had been dropped there. The girl whose folks kept the cow that supplied our fresh milk went out in the bushes with boys who were only three or four years older than me. Some kids my own age were forever telling dirty stories. The toilet walls at school made me want to throw up. A lot of people were ⁱⁿ for a rough time when they died.

They had it coming. They'd had their chances to be as good as I was -- or as I was trying to be. How good was I? It seemed to me, sometimes, that my very own body was trying to betray my soul. Suppose the cow girl should

just happen to be walking out in the bushes when I ~~was~~? Even to think about the bushes was a sin, so abhorrent the Lord wouldn't leave the punishment to the Devil, He'd take care of it personally, and what my new nightmare seemed to be telling me was that being good had nothing to do with being God.

THE PROBLEM OF ETERNITY

Friday we'd have dinner at a little restaurant on Aurora Highway near the Seattle city limits, go to the Princess Theater in Edmonds, and finish with hamburgers and root beer at the Triple X on the highway at Foy. On the way home, an hour past my regular bedtime, I'd fall asleep in the back seat of the Plymouth.

One night as my eyes were just closing the car rounded a bend and the window was full of stars. They jolted me wide awake.

The New Pursuer had been after me ^{for} a year. More carefully than ever ~~before~~ I was reviewing my sins. There couldn't be any complaint about my language -- my worst words were "heck" and "darn." I killed the fri^ears for Sunday dinner as painlessly as possible, chopping off their heads accurately and swiftly. I shot rats with the .410, but that was to defend the chickens. When I fired at packs of roving dogs I aimed carefully in order ~~not~~ to do ^{no} more than sting their behinds, a way of spanking them, for their own good. I did kill a quail once because Dad expected me to become a hunter like him and Uncle Bill; when Mother served me the poor little dead bird for supper I managed to eat it without crying; I did that while saying my prayers, promising never to ^{kill} ~~shoot~~ again. I put in a couple hours every day after school, all day Saturday, and part of Sunday doing home chores and jobs away from home to earn money to buy bicycle tires and most of my own clothes. I got along just fine with my folks and practi^cally never was sassy. I'd just finished memorizing the Boy Scout Law from A Scout is Trustworthy to A Scout is Reverⁿet.

Girls. Well, a couple years before, while spending a day with the Consani cousins in Seattle, something happened, ~~I was still trying to get over.~~ Patsy

had gone to live with the Consanis when we moved East, and this day she took me aside and whispered ~~to me~~ that her friend Lorraine liked me. After a while ~~the~~ four of us were in the lawn swing, Lorraine and me squeezed between Patsy on her side and cousin Junior on mine. I got up my nerve to do what they all expected, tried to kiss her. She kept giggling and turning her face away, so I only got her on the ear.

If this wasn't my worst sin, it nearly was. ~~I felt confident that~~ ^{was certain to} any fair judge ~~would~~ call me a sure shot for Heaven.

Heaven: We'd eat out every Friday and some Saturdays, at the little restaurant on Aurora and the Merry Go Round in downtown Seattle, where we went before the Depression. We'd go to shows two or three nights a week, at the Princess and at the downtown palaces, the Orpheum and Fifth Avenue and Paramount, ~~we would before the Depression.~~ Afterward we'd have hamburgers and mugs of Triple root beer at the ~~Triple~~ X or fish and chips at the Alley Kat. There'd be no end of camping trips to Muckleberry, picnics with the cousins, swimming at Richmond Beach and Golden Gardens, ice skating on the peat bog, and rowing the boat at the Consanis' summer cabin on Martha Lake. I'd read all the books in the public library and buy ~~about~~ ^{dozens} for my ~~home~~ ^{own} library, listen to all the good radio programs, get plenty of great Christmas presents, have all my dogs and cats with me again, and Grandmother Hawthorne too. I'd spend only as much time as I enjoyed chopping wood and mowing lawns and hoeing corn and feeding chickens.

This would go on for a thousand years, a million years, a billion years, a trillion trillion trillion years. But there wouldn't be enough books. You'd have to read each one a million times, and see all the shows a million times.

~~and~~ Opening Christmas presents would be a waste ^{because} you already had a million of everything you wanted. At Huckleberry campfires we always ended up sick of marshmallows. In a few trillion years a person probably would get fed up with frozen Milky Ways and banana splits and root beer, and Heaven would only just have got started, it was never ever going to stop.

How did God handle this? Maybe when an angel began to look bored he'd be stowed in a freezer for a billion ~~years~~ billion years, to wake up hungry ^{ice cream.} for ~~a banana split.~~ But after waking up the billionth time, when they handed him the banana split...

That's what I saw in the stars. That's what the Pursuer was saying.

THE PROBLEM OF BEAUTY

As our Scout gang was chugging along the Quil^e River trail I looked at the trees and decided they were as big and tall and old as those we once had camped under, ~~time and again~~, at Huckleberry. It was a "home" forest. I wouldn't have called it "beautiful," though.

The earliest things I thought of as beautiful probably were Christmas trees, birthday cakes, my Keene Coaster, and banana cream pies. After a while there were girls, of course. Not Patsy, she was family. Not the girl who lived next door in Lowell and taught me to punch little kids in the guts and sock them in the nose; she was a pal.

But the girl who sat in front of me at Sunday School in Lowell had such long, golden curls and wore so white a frock she could have gotten into Heaven on looks alone. A girl at Ronald School was so slender and dark and delicate I couldn't breathe when she was around; luckily she was in the seventh grade and I the eighth. I was in love with Janet Gaynor, ^{naturally,} ~~of course,~~ and the girl who was shot dead in her wedding gown in Smiling Through. As for Patsy's friend, Lorraine, whose left ear I kissed a dozen times, if she hadn't moved out of the neighborhood there's no telling what might have happened.

Mount Rainier was exciting, yet I never thought of it as beautiful, not even when the flowers were in bloom at Paradise. I was no fan of flowers. Mother was, and we had flowers in the yard, flowers in window boxes, flowers in pots. I helped ~~her~~ with her specialty, sweet peas, by digging a trench and filling it with chicken ~~manure~~ manure that got the plants so charged up they exploded in color. I took my share of pride in the vases of sweet peas all

over the house. They were a family tradition with Mother and made her happy. The only satisfaction I got from hours on my knees weeding Mrs. Brown's flowers, getting a crick in my back, was the money.

At lunch time we Scouts were still in deep forest; ~~but~~ a couple hours later we climbed out of ~~the~~ shadows into ~~the~~ hot sun on the bare rockslides of the Poop Out Drag. All around us were the Olympic Mountains, said to be very beautiful, and just this year ^{made} ~~made~~ a national park, like Rainier. I was too busy gasping for air and sucking a pebble to notice. I passed other Scouts collapsed on the trail and expected to do the same myself any minute. However, I made Camp Mystery with enough poop left to stir a Ten Can of rice while the leaders were backtrailing to pick up poopouts' packs.

Many of my regular jobs at home were tough -- digging ditches in hardpan you could barely dent with a pick, splitting blocks of knotty fir into chunks small enough for the kitchen range, and pumping my bicycle up a hill with a full load of newspapers. I'd worked hard in my life, but never so hard, so long, as that day of hauling my Trapper Nelson eight miles from big-tree forest to the little trees a mile above sealevel. I didn't poop out, but I was cleaned out, not a drop of sweat left, limp and empty in every muscle and bone from toes to nose. I felt really good, body and soul.

After supper the leaders let the fire ~~go~~ ^{die} to save wood. The poopouts crawled in sleeping bags to keep warm. The big kids ran whooping and hollering straight up the side of Iron Mountain. I walked the trail, alone and slow.

I discovered the Source of the Big Quilcene River, where it gushed from under a boulder, cold and sparkling and delicious.

The trees were scattered in little clumps, short and pointy and neat, just waiting for the baubles and tinsel and strings of lights.

There were hundreds of acres of grass, a lawn ^{hundreds of} ~~a thousand~~ times bigger than Dr. Brown's, which I hated only less than his wife's flowers. If all the boys in all the Scout troops of the Seattle Area Council spent the summer pushing lawnmowers they never could keep this much lawn this nice.

There were the flowers, too.

A few weeks later I entered Lincoln High School, a thousand girls in the halls every day, and it was a miracle I ever caught my breath. When the teacher assigned us to do a theme I wrote about the flowers at Marmot Pass.

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Dirty jokes and the drawings on toilet walls made me as ashamed as ever to be listening and looking. Yet certain dreams I was having were along the same lines; ~~and~~ the girls in them weren't girls I knew, they were more beautiful by far. What happened on back roads, most adults did that, home in bed if not in the woods on Saturday night. The Bible was full of it.

This was no excuse for the cow girl. She was doomed. I was very sorry, she was such a loving person, a gang of little brothers and sisters always hanging on her skirts. My dreams were going to be forgiven -- they had to be. Might her trips to the bushes be overlooked?

In the seventh grade I turned out for basketball and made the team ^{as the sixth man.} The feat was not so impressive as it sounds because ~~the~~ the sixth man ~~was~~ only got in a game if a starter broke a leg. Anyway, I had a ~~premonition~~ suspicion my selection had less to do with athletic skill than ~~being~~ being the smartest boy in school. One night at practice the sixth-grader who deserved to be sixth man shoved me during a scramble under the basket. I shoved him back. He dared me to meet him outside. I was winding up a roundhouse like the one that killed my Tormentor back East when stars exploded behind my eyes. I got up, he knocked me down again. I never got a fist near his guts or nose. I never saw his fists. Bleeding my way home in the night, I wished the hashish fiends would finish me off.

Next morning I was on patrol at the school crossing of Aurora ^{Highway} when the tough kid arrived -- to knock me down again, I supposed. But he stood behind the flag until I held it out to stop the cars. A morning soon after he said "Hi"

and halfway smiled. A few days later he said his cat had just had kittens and offered me one. I went to his house to make my pick. The way he cuddled the kittens you couldn't imagine him busting anybody's face.

I'd decided that God, being all-powerful, wouldn't need or tolerate a Devil, would punish evil Himself. He wouldn't use a red-hot furnace, either -- too crude. There were worse things than fire. For instance, the childrens' ward at three o'clock in the morning.

Nothing I'd done, so far, would deserve very much more than a hard spanking. What about the cow girl's trips to the bushes? She was so wonderful with little children. The sixth-grader who made hamburger of my face? He was so kind to animals.

Looking at the stars, understanding what they were, how could anyone think that over the terrible long haul of eternity anything the puny creatures on this speck of a planet might do would rate Hell?

There had to be punishment, and for a few kids I'd met, plenty of it. I'd heard about a place called "Purgatory," and wasn't sure if Methodists went there but hoped so. In fact, it made me feel easier about some members of my own family, knowing that in a few million years they'd join me in Heaven. So far as that goes, a few thousand years wouldn't do me any harm, cleaning up loose ends.

PRAYER

Now I lay me down to sleep,
 And pray the Lord my soul to keep,
 And should I die before I wake,
 I pray the Lord my soul to take.

This was the little jingle that made so many kids of my generation night-screamers, reminding ^{them} at the earliest introduction to the Christian religion that in the darkness of the bedroom lurked death and the Devil.

Along about school-starting time I graduated to:

Our Father, which art in Heaven,
 Hallowed be Thy name.
 Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done,
 On earth, as it is in Heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread,
 And forgive us our trespasses,
 As we forgive those who trespass against us.
 Lead us not into temptation,
 But deliver us from evil,
 For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever.

(That may not be King James perfect; it's ~~scrambled~~ from memory, forty-three years after the last of approximately 3800 bedtime recitations.) I tacked on postscripts: "Please take care of Mother and Dad" and the dogs and cats, aunts and uncles and cousins; apologies for sins of the day and promises to do better; requests for help in this or that, including the possibility He might put in a good word for me with the girl who currently wasn't letting me breathe. Amen.

^{the annual}
 On Boy Scout Sunday the troops of the North Shore District assembled at a single church. One year it was in The Highlands, behind the Cyclone Fence patrolled on the inside by armed guards and on the outside by deputy sheriffs. (One of these once threatened to arrest me, and my dog too, for walking a public road a half-mile from the Fence.) Simply being inside the Fence

and not being chased was awesome. Then the minister came to the pulpit dressed like a Catholic priest. He said "Let us pray" and the millionaires of the regular congregation vanished. They'd fallen on their knees. We'd wondered about those little stools. They did make it easy to fall on your knees.

For all the kneeling (up and down, up and down), and the Catholic-looking minister, and the way he half-sang the prayer, the church was no more impressive than mine. Our minister gave just as holy a sermon in his plain blue suit. Nobody could beat him ^{at} praying. ~~he was a first class expert.~~ This is not to say our minister thrilled me. ^{Simply, he} ~~was~~ was no more boring than the fellow the millionaires paid fifty times more.

Hiring a professional to pray is like turning on the radio to hear great singers. They've got better voices than you. But they don't have your voice, they ~~can't~~ ^{don't} know your song.

Going to church on Sunday is for people who can't pray. John the Baptist went out and talked to God alone, on his own direct line.

SIMPLIFYING AND COMPLICATING

Having had red measles at school-starting age, in common with just about every other kid in America, my ear started aching, my six-year molars came in rotten, by high school I wore glasses, and then, in common with just about every other kid in America, I got "growing pains," as medical science described them to parents, since medical science could do nothing about them.

The gimp developed in my hip near the end of the storm-blasted, soaking-wet, shaking-and-shivering, groaning-and-giggling two-day flight from the headwaters of the Lillian River -- up the Lillian Glacier, along the crest of Lost Ridge, and down from Lost Pass to the Dosewallips River. Over the winter I gradually gave up trying to run but ~~by~~ ^{by} spring could still walk without much of a limp. Since this was to be my fourth and greatest high-rambling mountain year, I opened with a whizbang of a weekend -- hauling a pack and plowing snow 15 miles on Saturday and, for light afternoon exercise, paddling a raft through ice floes across Lake Dorothy and back. Sunday morning my buddies made crutches for me to hobble the nine miles to the car. The doctor told my folks to keep me out of the mountains a year.

It wasn't the same as being sent to Hell, but it certainly meant no Heaven. Of the bulk of the 900-odd days ^{of my life} since Marmot Pass I remembered scattered moments. Of the 16 of those days spent in Olympic high country I had virtually total recall, minute by minute. I'd existed the 900-odd days. The 16 days I'd lived.

Ironically, I had, for a fact, finally "got my growth." The 12-mile paper route, in my earlier years as a sickly runt a hard 3 bicycle hours, had shrunk to a routine and easy $1\frac{1}{4}$ hours; one crisp winter day I did it

in a blazing 1 hour and 5 minutes flat, 180 copies of the Seattle Shopping News sent winging onto doorsteps, none in the bushes. It was from the ranks of people able to pull off such a feat that would come the person to make the first ascent of Mount Everest, if it should turn out that Mallory hadn't.

Sometimes viciously acute, always nagging, the pain made it clear I no longer was a candidate for Everest. God knew when I'd even return to Marmot Pass. God wasn't saying.

A first I did achieve that spring was ~~my first~~ grades lower than A. My pals, as straight-A as I had been, were stunned by my B in physics. Far worse was my C in solid geometry, a snap course that had no ~~place in the curriculum~~ ^{business being required} of kids as smart as us. I shrugged. ~~I wasn't so sick I couldn't have gotten~~ ~~A's had I wished.~~ ~~I'd had so many~~ ~~the'd lost importance.~~

The important thing wasn't what people -- teachers -- thought of me, but what I thought of people. My pals were children, ~~teaching to adults~~, seeking good grades like pats on the head. The growing pains were growing me up fast, ~~perhaps too fast.~~ ^{toadied to.} Adults were no longer to be ~~accepted and worshipped on faith.~~ They had to prove themselves to me, as they did to other adults. The grades the teachers "gave" me were my judgments of them. The physics teacher was a good fellow and I'd given him an A for fall semester, ~~for his goodness;~~ in the spring he bored me ^{and got a B.} The C expressed my moral outrage at the solid geometry teacher for staring at girls' behinds as if they were banana cream pies.

Everything, now, was up for judgment. I took the excuse of the gimping ^{an} to graduate myself from Sunday School, to join my folks as ^{an} independent, non-social Christian. As for God, despite my being about as good as a person can be without ~~becoming~~ ^{becoming} a minister, He hadn't seen fit to do anything about the pain. A lot more praying was in order to get an explanation.

Everybody else in my Seattle world was Protestant. I tried to make constructive use of family gatherings by asking adults what sort of Protestant they were, and why, and why not some other sort, or Catholic or Jewish or atheist, and aunts would start to cry and uncles ~~to~~ get red in the face. Dad advised me that a person who wanted to get along never talked politics or religion.

Left on my own, ~~and wondering which road~~ I wondered which road God would prefer me to take.

Come to the church in the wildwood,
Come to the church in the vale,
No lovelier scene in my childhood
Than the little white church in the vale.

Our church wasn't white, wasn't in a vale, but was in the wildwood and ^{to my eye the} ^{in my opinion} certainly was a beauty, a tall vault of big, sturdy timbers, /as fitting a house for God as any cathedral. I hadn't a clue what made it "Methodist."

Bits and pieces of reading told me an eighteenth-century Englishman named John Wesley was involved. John the Baptist didn't invent that denomination, which seems to have started around 1800, in England and America. During the Civil War it split and stayed split, though the Southern Baptists were said to be sending missionaries to convert the Northern Baptists. A Lutheran was a follower of Martin Luther, a sixteenth-century German who said he wasn't the one who had left the Church, the Pope was. Every Swede I'd ever met was Lutheran. On Boy Scout Sunday our troop joined with other troops in ~~going to~~ the North Shore District to go to a fancy church in The Highlands that felt Catholic; my Catholic buddies said it really was, except its Pope was Henry VIII. The Presbyterians were started by John Calvin, who preached that some infants were doomed to Hell without ever a chance to commit a sin. They came down out of Scotland to help * kill King Charles. The Congregationalists also dated from

the Civil War (the English one), on Cromwell's side; Grandmother and Grandfather Manning met at the Yellow Meeting House, an historic Congregational church, and why they switched to Methodists never was explained. Some ~~many~~ Congregationals had split off to be Unitarians; I was pleased that other people, a hundred years before he, had decided three Gods were too many. Our next-door neighbors were Mormons, fine people, but how they could swallow miracles in nineteenth-century New York was beyond me. Another neighbor was Christian Scientist; I appreciated her belief that doctors don't cure diseases, they cause them.

None of this was ^{much} ~~any~~ more help than the Bible.

CROSSROADS

By our sophomore year at Lincoln High we smart boys were a tight bunch, occupying the same table in the lunchroom every day, our property rights rigidly respected by the two thousand other students.

One of the bunch was a Jew, the first I'd ever known; he didn't talk about it and neither did anyone else. Two were Catholic; we'd never have known were it not for their annual debates over what to give up for Lent -- whiskey or cigars or loose women. The only time the lunch table ~~started~~ got into a discussion of religion one of the guys said he was an atheist and that was such a jolt the subject was dropped. Everybody else was Protestant.

Everybody else in my Seattle world was Protestant. I tried to make constructive use of family gatherings by asking adults what sort of Protestant they were, and why, and why^{not} some other sort, or Catholic or Jewish or atheist, and the aunts would start to cry and the uncles get red in the face. Dad advised me that a person who wanted to get along never talked politics or religion.

Left on my own and nearing sixteen, I wondered which road God would prefer me to take.

What road was I quitting?

Come to the church in the wildwood,
 Come to the church in the vale,
 No lovelier scene in my childhood
 Than the little white church in the vale.

Our church wasn't white, wasn't in a vale, but was in the wildwood and certainly was a beauty, a tall vault of big, honest timbers, as fitting a house for God as any cathedral. I hadn't a notion what made it "Methodist." An

eighteenth-century Englishman named John Wesley was involved. John the Baptist couldn't be responsible for that denomination, which seems to have started around 1800, in England and America. During the Civil War it split and stayed split, though I'd read in the papers that the Southern Baptists were sending missionaries to convert the Northern Baptists. A Lutheran was a follower of Martin Luther, the sixteenth-century German who said he wasn't the one who had left the Church, the Pope was. Every Swede I'd ever met was Lutheran. The church in The Highlands felt Catholic, and my Catholic buddies said it really was, except its Pope was Henry VIII, ~~and his successors~~. The Presbyterians were started by John Calvin, who preached that some infants were doomed to Hell without ever a chance to commit a sin or say a prayer. They came down out of Scotland to help kill ~~the then pope of England~~, King Charles. The Congregationalists also dated from the Civil War (the English one), on Cromwell's side; I was surprised to learn Grandmother Manning had once been Congregational; she was so royalist that her heart was half-broken by Edward's abdication. Some Congregationalists had split off to be Unitarians; I was delighted that other people, a hundred years before me, had decided three Gods were ~~too~~ too many. Our next-door neighbors were Mormons, very nice people, but how they could swallow miracles in nineteenth-century New York was beyond me. Another neighbor was Christian Scientist; I ^{appreciated} sympathized with her belief that doctors don't cure diseases, they cause them.

Whichever road I chose, the Bible would be my guidebook. That meant I was going to have to make ^{another} ~~a~~ ~~mighty~~ effort to try to read it -- to figure what it was about those events of thousands of years ago, on the other side of the

world, involving hardly anyone except Jews, that made them so important to my people in my times on my side of the world.

Our religion -- whatever it was -- only functioned at all fully two days of the year. One of these I could have done without. Before the Depression, Easter meant dressing up in brandnew clothes and visiting people who were equally uncomfortable. Later it was making myself sick on the worst candy ever invented. Then, as a Scout, I got up in the middle of the night, put on my uniform, and joined the troop in directing traffic for the Sunrise Services at Washelli Cemetery. I was so groggy afterwards the whole day was shot.

Christmas was the best thing about being a Christian -- the wise men and the star, the shepherds on the hill, Christmas carols on the radio and Lionel Barrymore doing Scrooge ~~again~~, Santa Claus and the reindeer, the stockings, the tree, the presents, the great big family gathering for Christmas dinner. We'd go for a long walk to work off the turkey and stuffing and candied sweet potatoes and mince pie and squash pie, stuff ourselves again at supper, and finish off the day by cramming into a single small room, aunts and uncles and cousins, grandmothers and babies, twenty or thirty of us, locking the door and turning out the lights and playing a great big screaming game of Murder.

THE QUESTION

Toward the end, I developed a real feeling for our church. Looking up through the big timbers to the peak of the roof, out the tall windows to the forest, I sensed the power and the glory -- or would have had it not been for the muffled hymns and the bang-clang piano. I considered asking the minister if I could come when the place was empty, but decided he might take that wrong.

Thinking back over the flowers of Marmot Pass, the clouds lapping the crest of Delmonte Ridge, the moraines heaped up in Deception Basin, the marmots whistling at Hayden Pass, the dazzling ~~whiteness of the~~ Anderson Glacier, the roaring storm on Lost Ridge, I realized that what had made the sixteen days in the high Olympics so intense was the presence of God. He'd also been at Huckleberry, of course.

Had it been possible in this summer of my sixteenth birthday to carry the new simplifications to the Olympic wilderness, the new complications might have been dealt with more readily. Bedtime prayers weren't doing the job. Even with omniscience, how could God ^{be expected to} pay close attention to millions upon millions of routine rattlings piling into His ear the same time every night?

I gimped around the neighborhood woods thinking about the stars and Heaven and my Pursuer, ~~still hot on my trail, whatever it was, and the Monk, long gone.~~ A thing to be said for him was that he'd cared enough to haunt me. ~~More than you could say for some.~~

→ The neighborhood woods were second-growth Douglas fir, young and small compared to the wilderness. The back roads were ^{soiled by too-vivid reminders} littered with garbage that ~~reminded too vividly of the flesh, for the spirit~~ ^{the spirit} ~~reminded too vividly of the flesh, for the spirit~~.

Then Arild introduced me to the secret trail to Hidden Lake, where he went to steal trout from the millionaires of The Highlands. The forest was

^{cleanly}
as purely virgin as in Mount Rainier and Olympic National Parks, the trees of a size with those of Huckleberry and the Quilcene. The waterfalls were of a kind with Constance Creek and Deception Creek.

Time after time I returned, as alone as John the Baptist. I'd lie on my back in the breezes of a waterfall and soak up coolness of the forest floor, breathe smells of trees and bushes, listen to birds near and far, and fix my gaze straight up through the trees to the sky. I sent the simplest message possible. Put in words it would have been:

"I am here. Are You?"

TOWARD BLASPHEMY

Of the thousand-odd male students at Lincoln High, thirty of us, juniors and seniors, were privileged to wear the black-and-red sweater with the white-fanged lynx on the chest. Election to the Lynx Club carried the duty to serve the school. My most notable contribution was on the Pep Committee, ^{chief} ~~most~~ ~~notable~~ activity of ^{which} ~~the Pep Committee~~ was staging Pep Assemblies. The committee recognized me as the creative one, as evidenced by my ability to ^{give up} ~~stop~~ getting A's, and I was assigned ^{me} full responsibility to produce the first rally of the fall, for the Ballard game. Miss Miles, our faculty advisor, ~~had known me since sophomore year~~ but kept her qualms to herself.

Piano and violin playing "Hearts and Flowers," the curtain opened to discover Grandmother (a Bob in a shawl) whimpering in a rocking chair as I wept and wrung my hands. I was wearing an old dress Mother had made over for me, ^{hiding} ~~corduroy trousers~~ ^{the} my ~~ears~~ rolled up to ~~my~~ knees underneath, and a fright wig from the ~~family~~ cedar chest. (Only the Pep Committee and the cast knew the identity of the show's female star. Later in the day, face washed clean of Mother's lipstick and mascara and rouge, I overheard two female classmates whispering, "Who was she? Really cute! Nice legs!" I was a bigger hit as a girl than I ever was as a boy.)

The burden of my falsetto lament was that it was winter ("snow" was thrown through the window on cue) and Olaf Ballardson (Ballard High was in the Scandinavian section of Seattle) was about to foreclose on the mortgage.

The door flew open (more snow) and Ballardson (Joe) skulked in, whirling his cape and twirling his mustache and sneering, "Heh! Heh! Heh! Me proud beauty!"

The Yell Team dashed on stage resplendent in game uniforms and megaphones and led the audience -- a thousand students and teachers (the auditorium capacity -- at formal assemblies ^{with attendance} required of the whole enrollment we had to have First Assembly and Second Assembly -- Pep Assemblies took place before the school day and weren't required, but word had gotten out about our rehearsals) in:

BALLARDSON! BALLARDSON! BOO! BOO! BOO!"

Ballardson slunk off, "Heh! Heh! Heh!"

I whined, "If only Abraham Lincoln were here!"

Ed ran on stage and struck a pose. The audience cheered.

"Oh, sir!" I cried, "Are you Abraham Lincoln?"

"No, miss, I'm his Press Agent -- but here comes Abe Lincoln now!"

The script had Abe (another Bob, resplendent in Lynx Club sweater, naturally) scurrying on stage. The big laugh we expected at this point was the contrast between Ed's six feet five inches and Bob-Abe's five feet six inches. However, while waiting in the wings Abe noted ropes hanging from the ceiling, climbed atop a packing case, and, on cue, the Lynx Club sweater came swinging through the air. The audience gasped. So did Press Agent and Grandmother and I. So did Abe, because he didn't let go of the rope in time, swung to the high point of the pendulum, and dropped to the stage with a sickening thud.

Fortunately he had no lines. Everything was said for him by Press Agent, who elaborated the virtues of the Railsplitter, the Great Emancipator, who recovered enough to accompany the speech by taking bows across the front of the stage ~~with his hands over his eyes~~ and blowing kisses to the audience. The Yell Team dashed on to lead: "LINCOLN! LINCOLN! RAH! RAH! RAH!"

Grandmother and I then were left alone. Ballardson returned, ^{shoved} ~~loaded~~ me into a box, and commenced sawing it in half, "Heh! Heh! Heh!"

Grandmother leapt from her rocking chair and screeched to the audience, "Don't worry, folks! Everything's going to be a-a-all right!" The Yell Team dashed on: "GRANDMOTHER! GRANDMOTHER! RAH! RAH! RAH!"

Press Agent ran on stage and rescued me from the saw. The Yell Team dashed on: "PRESS AGENT! PRESS AGENT! RAH! RAH! RAH!"

Press Agent chased Ballardson up and down the stage. Abe followed, shadow-boxing. The Yell Team led: "GIVE 'EM THE AX THE AX THE AX, GIVE 'EM THE AX THE AX THE AX!"

Ballardson slunk off, snarling "Curses! Foiled again!" I jumped up in Press Agent's arms, Abe and Grandmother danced, and the Yell Team led the fight song: "We're from Lincoln High School, we fight to win!"

The half of the school which had managed to cram into the auditorium spent the rest of the day describing the show to the other half. The principal told Miss Miles that if the School Board heard about it there'd be the devil to pay. Miss Miles and the Pep Committee took umbrage and resigned. The principal said if the School Board heard about that there'd be double devils to pay. We took pity and un-resigned.

Miss Miles took me aside and said she never would interfere with my creative freedom, but could I possibly come up with a different idea for the next assembly than my proposed debate between Coach Nollan and God about who was in charge of Lincoln High? Whichever role I chose for myself there was bound to be trouble.

HIS AND HERS

By waving goodbye to Jesus as he rode his donkey off into the palm trees, side-saddle, I unwittingly ceased being a Christian -- a fact that ^{had I known} would have [^] ~~been~~ beyond words, ~~shocked~~ frightened me/ since I was, at the time, still a dime-a-week Sunday School Methodist. Presumably I had become a candidate for Judaism, had anyone been handy to lead me through the Old Testament. However, was that the faith of John the Baptist? The Illustrated Bible Story Book placed him in the New Testament. It was his God I was seeking.

Stripped of Jesus and church and Bible, his God stood forth naked and whole and as enormously beyond comprehension as infinity and eternity. If the effort were sufficiently strenuous and sustained, might a glimmering be attainable?

Lying beside Hidden Creek in the moss beneath the tall firs, I strove to cleanse my mind of fleshly distractions, fill my spirit with water and trees and sky, hoping through these to approach the Whole. I began in winter, on after-school afternoons. The moss was too wet, the shadows too early, the shivering too violent.

In lengthening days of spring I had daylight enough to continue down the creek to the beach, to lie in warm sand, gaze over Puget Sound to the Olympic Mountains, and fill up on sunset colors of sky and water. This was much better.

My life recently had taken an astounding turn. A girl whose black eyes half-paralyzed my arms and legs and tongue agreed to go with me to a movie. In the theater she had a seizure. She sighed as if about to die and her head dropped

on my shoulder as heavily as if she had. The smell of her hair paralyzed whatever of me had been operational to that point.

Winter afternoons in the cold forest by Hidden Creek, ~~and~~^{with} the still-nagging pain, recalled the gale on Lost Ridge. Spring sunsets on the beach of Puget Sound, and the new love, contained the flowers of Marmot Pass.

Why "He"? For the storm winds and rocky peaks and icy glaciers? What, then, about alpine meadows and spring sunsets? In growing beyond human comprehension, God had outgrown the human body. God plainly was both -- and neither -- He and She.

CHILDHOOD'S END

The black-eyed girl stopped laying her head on my shoulder, wouldn't so much as get in the Model A. I wished I could be on hand to watch her read my suicide letter. The impossibility took the fun out of killing myself.

The pain flitted from hip to hip, leg to leg, at last settling in the ankles, which swelled up too big for shoes. I wore bedroom slippers to school and my pals, who knew nothing about the swelling or the pain, laughed their heads off. The slippers were so comfortable I experimented with other rational alternatives to ~~the~~ mindless conventions; when the torso formerly emblazoned by the red-and-black lynx with the ferocious white teeth appeared in a sloppy old sweatshirt, my pals threw fits.

The lascivious solid-geometry teacher also taught mathanalysis, a senior-year course smart boys (no girls) took to show how smart they were. ~~I went along to be with the gang.~~ The teacher's eyes popped when he saw me. Struggling to hide his ~~sadistic~~ glee, he sent me to the blackboard to explain integral calculus and was so astounded by my precise exposition he missed ~~a girl's~~ ^{the} behind ^{of the girl who} ~~which~~ happened by, delivering faculty mail. I didn't enroll for the second semester. My smart pals ~~took~~ ^{viewed} that as a wilful resignation from smartness. They were very slow at growing up.

Three of my four spring classes were in English, from Miss Graves, who took many things, including the state of my soul, very seriously, but considered blue slips silly and never filled one out when I skipped. I was in and out of school all day -- to the beach to see ~~if~~ the Olympic Mountains were ~~still on the other side of Puget Sound,~~ downtown to ~~find out~~ ^{watch learn} what ~~the~~ grown-ups did when ~~us~~ kids weren't around, and to University Way to reconnoiter the new

terrain

~~society~~ I'd be entering come fall.

I liked to end the day with a bang, and my last class being chemistry, often did. Bombs made my smart pals jumpy as grasshoppers because the teacher, midyear replacement for the brilliant man who had quit to go to war, didn't know the answers to the exam questions he ^{himself,} wrote. My pals, ^{not} couldn't believe the adult world would submit them to the absolute dominion of an idiot, ~~They~~ agonized over the questions, searching for intricate subtleties. They who never had received any letter on their report cards other than A saw twelve unblemished years in danger of last-minute ruination. As for me, I looked at each question through the small, muddled mind of the teacher and gave what he thought was the answer. My grades were, by a wide margin, the highest in the class. My atheist pal seemed likely to make converts. But what would he convert to?

In March my year of medical exile officially ended. My bombing partner, Arild, was set to enter the Navy immediately on graduation, and having listened to Dad's tales of life as a bluejacket, knew he was in for years under the thumbs of idiots. Our final weekends of our last year in the childhood security of high school were upon us and Arild and I, for reasons partly the same and partly different, we ought to be spending them running free and wild. ^{felt} But our weekends were occupied earning money to buy gas for our Model A's. We therefore revised the calendar to add extra weekends.

On a Tuesday morning we set out up the trail from the Stillaguamish River to Heather Lake, in a cirque on the side of Mt. Pilchuck. ^{Here,} Two years before, in June of the Lost Ridge summer, I'd slipped out of the troop camp at dawn, alone, to pursue Bird Study merit badge. In the forest I'd heard the mating call of the varied thrush. On the lakeshore I'd watched a water ouzel ~~drink~~ dip-dip-dipping at the knee.

We ascended big-tree forest to the lip of the basin, there entered deep snow and a dense cloud, and plowed a trench around the frozen shore to the far side, where avalanches had buried every tree and rock and bush. Whiteness was complete and universal. Our bodies seemed to be dissolving in it, as in some potent acid. We kept glancing at each other to make sure we weren't.

From a dozen grade schools scattered about Seattle's north end and the wildwoods beyond the city limits Arild and I and our pals had come to Lincoln High. We'd spent four years constructing a society as perfect as any in history and felt sure we stood on the verge of marvels. In fact, ^{incredibly,} our society was ~~about~~ ^{soon} to become extinct. Today we were children. Tomorrow we ^{would be} sailors, ^{or} soldiers, ^{or} some other species of ~~raving~~ lunatic. The world had turned absurd at Pearl Harbor. ^{That is} ~~or rather,~~ we only now were realizing it had been all along. ^{absurd}

From above in the void came a mighty rumbling. We ^{burst} ~~burst~~ out laughing. We were here, cool and calm and sane, in a void loud with ~~possible~~ death. At this very minute ^{- smart} ~~of the Tuesday afternoon~~ our dumb pals were there, children perched in a row on the edges of their chairs, sweating out the idiot.

INFINITE ZERO

Of the themes on "My Philosophy of Life" which Miss Graves chose to read aloud in class, mine was the only one based on thinking deeper than that reflected in newspaper editorials celebrating the Fourth of July and Christmas. Miss Graves doubtless was the sole person in the room, not excluding me, who understood I had ceased being a Christian. As for my social and political views, I was one of the few in the class who did not remain, as at birth, a granite-head Republican; those few were Catholic Democrats. A while earlier, browsing in the Seattle Public Library, I'd chanced on a book entitled Proposed Roads to Freedom, by an Englishman named Bertrand Russell; ever since ^{then} I'd switched back and forth between the roads, generally favoring anarchism, and only partly because of the bombs.

In her comments on my theme Miss Graves used a term I'd never before heard yet understood instantly -- "mystical experience." She mentioned some names I didn't know. Emerson I recognized. He'd lived in the area where Dad grew up and ~~was~~ was still alive when Grandmother and Grandfather Manning were little kids. He spoke my language and was practically family. Sadly, I found him harder going than the Bible. I liked the way he ~~was~~ stripping^{ed} God of fancy clothes and mumbo-jumbo, but he struck me as also throwing out the flowers and sunsets and storms. All he had left were lofty, bloodless, abstract ideas not worth a mystical experience.

One Sunday when I was casting about for something easy to read, to take my mind off a particularly excruciating throbbing in the leg, I reached up to my bedroom bookshelf and Tom Sawyer came to hand. I'd not read Mark Twain in years, since our wealthy neighbor, Dr. Brown, loaned me the Collected

Works, a volume at a time. For months I ^{had} proceeded methodically along the shelf in his library, some five feet of it, skipping only a few inches here and there.

~~That~~ That Sunday afternoon I completely forgot my bones, and with Becky Thatcher to love, my broken heart as well. I proceeded to Huckleberry Finn, Roughing It, Life on the Mississippi, Tom Sawyer Abroad, and other *forgotten* ~~favorites~~ favorites. Connecticut Yankee brought me up short. My memory was dominated by the movie -- Will Rogers leading the charge of King Arthur's knights, not on horseback (nor, as in the book, on bicycles) but driving cute little Austins. The movie came from the sunshine and fun of Tom's world, the book from a dark and bitter otherwhere.

I revealed to Miss Graves my astonishing discovery that Mark Twain was more than a writer of children's books. She unlocked her personal bookcase and loaned me a volume that hadn't been in Dr. Brown's Collected Works and wasn't in the Lincoln High library either, nor the Seattle Public.

I read The Mysterious Stranger at a sitting. "Read" isn't the word. It was an experience, electrically intense, ~~distinctly mystical~~, absolutely and totally extinguishing my body, focusing my soul to a needle sharpness. I didn't understand what he was driving at and was in too big a rush to pause and ponder. Very early I saw the conclusion -- mine, if not his. I turned the final pages in a fierce exultation beyond any ever achieved lying in the forest or on the beach. Closing the book, I knew absolutely: THERE IS NO GOD.

FIRST STEPS ON THE ROADS TO FREEDOM

As a brandnew atheist, almost every day I junked another childhood prohibition and rejoiced at still another liberation of the spirit. A few freedoms, though, were hard to get into.

The worst language I'd ever used -- and just the once, provoked to a ^{blind} rage by a neighborhood kid -- was "red-assed baboon." Mother's maximums were "heck" and "darn." The rare occasions when Dad went beyond "hell" and "damn" in the presence of Mother and me were flamed in my memory.

At Washington Egg & Poultry Coop, where I got a job the week I graduated from Lincoln High, my ears were ceaselessly buffeted by references to every manner of physical function, sexual contact, and supernatural activity. Believing neither in God or the Devil and knowing man to be an animal, I couldn't object. Nevertheless, I came home from work feeling ~~like~~ I'd been punched in the gut eight hours in a row. I wasn't ready to hear, much less talk, Anglo-Saxon.

My closest sexual intimacy had been an arm around the shoulder of the black-eyed girl -- except the horrifying moment when my innocent elbow accidentally ^{at} brushed the front of her blouse and I expected her to shriek, her parents to run down the steps from their bedroom, the police to haul me off and cast me in a dungeon to rot, no more than I deserved.

At the Coop, the men on the labeling machine spent the day ^{openly} dickering with the women at the hand-labeling table to get together after work. Next morning the men on the machine openly discussed the getting together while the women at the table did the same. I had to approve. Animals should behave

as animals, which are real, not as angels, which aren't. Retroactively I had to forgive the solid-geometry-mathanalysis teacher, an animal if ever I saw one. Yet when a rangy, broad-hipped, big-sky-faced Montana gal from the labeling table invited me to go with her behind a stack of cases of Twistee Noodle Dinner, I next to fainted. In off-work hours I was exploring realms of literature where free love was a casual fact of life, ~~and thought that was great.~~

^{just}
I wasn't ready for it in person.

By summer's end I was loosening up some, no longer flinching at the words, beginning to ^{laugh at} ~~listen to~~ filthy jokes, ~~feeling no shame.~~ I was happily at home ^{among my fellow workers} ~~with the other people~~, especially after going on the swing shift, ^{which} ~~with~~ ^{had a} short crew and no bosses, the handful of us trusted to run the show on our own.

My job as "elevator boy" was to maintain the connection between the cannery upstairs and the labeling room and warehouse, downstairs with cargo doors opening on the railroad siding. Except for the bosses, who didn't work swing shift, I was the only person who knew the big picture -- what went on everywhere in the Coop, ^{upstairs and down,} and when, and who was rightfully present at this spot and that. Each evening when the ~~two~~ ovens in the cannery were opened and half a ton of hot chicken was dumped in bins and the cooks punched out, their night's work done, I swooped in, filled my clean cloth apron with steaming, ~~scalding,~~ ~~scalding~~ fowl, dodged into my elevator, and having descended to the warehouse, ^{from corner to corner,} dashed ~~around~~ greeted by happy laughter as I flung hot chickens in every direction, including out the cargo door to the crew in the cab of/ ^{the switch engine.}

Cussing and fornicating lay beyond my present powers but I'd learned to steal from the capitalists and give to the workers, and that was a step in the right direction.

THE MALIGNANT DECEIVER

As I came in sight of the cabin the lookout ran toward me through the meadows, two dogs at heel. Abruptly his smile twisted and he began shouting, waving his arms, "Get out of here! Go on! Beat it!" I stopped short.

"Darn porcupines!" he said, pointing to the one in the tree beside me on the trail. "Rustle around my garbage, the dogs go after 'em and then I'm pulling quills the rest of the day. Never any rest. Go to bed and they climb on the roof and chew the shakes. All night long, lay in my bunk -- crunch, crunch, crunch -- and the dogs, bark, bark, bark."

He took me on tour of his summer home, a mountain-top meadow plateau. We peered over the brink of the cirque cliffs, down to Glacier Lake, where Dad was fishing.

"Been watching you since you left camp," he said. "Every weekend I watch people start up from the lake. Lose sight of them when they go behind the buttress. Sit and wait, thinking now they should be at Surprise Gap, now they should be coming through the trees where I spotted you. You're the first one since they packed me in, last week of June."

It was now Labor Day weekend.

He invited me in the cabin and explained the firefinder. The radio ~~was~~ surprised me. "This is the only lookout with a radio. The Great Northern is electrified through the tunnel, too much static for a telephone. The other lookouts get together evenings on the party line and jaw back and forth. I never talk to anybody but the district office, ~~to tell them~~ to tell them I'm still here and going to bed. If I try to gas a little they tell me not to

run down my batteries. ~~was~~ they will take messages for my folks, telling them I'm fine and if they ever manage to get up here I'd sure like some canned peaches. ^{But nobody ever gets up here.} They give me a general notion how the war is going. ~~is~~ That's it. The only time I'm allowed to call ~~them~~ aside from ~~the~~ check-in is to report smokes."

There hadn't been many this summer, he said. Lucky for America. He swept his arm around the horizons of forests up and down and across the Cascades. In ^{hushed} ~~lowered~~ voice he asked, "Do you realize that if the Japs burned all this the whole thing would be over?"

In the months since a couple of submarines had surfaced off the Oregon-California coast and lobbed ~~a~~ a few shells from deck guns, the war had receded into the immensity of the Pacific Ocean. Suddenly I was standing on the decisive battleground. I surveyed the horizons, wondering how the Japs would pull it off.

"The night of the big storm I thought we were done for," he said. "Lightning, lightning, lightning, everywhere at once. If the rain hadn't put out the fires as fast as they started, that would have been it."

A year short of having to register for the draft, none of my friends or relatives within two thousand miles of guns being fired in anger, I hadn't yet ^{been able} ~~found it possible~~ to take the war too seriously -- not even now, ~~finding~~ ~~myself~~ in the middle of a prime Jap target. However, the thought of being in a lightning storm atop Surprise Mountain, highest point on the ridge between Spark Plug Mountain and Thunder Mountain -- that gave me the willies.

The lookout had a wooden stool, the ^{leg} bottoms ~~of the legs~~ cupped in glass insulators. There he had sat out the night, a dog under each arm. "Between flashes, in the dark, I'd see the cookstove glowing red from the current -- redder, and redder, and redder. Something was rattling the window and I

thought it was hail. In the morning there were globs of copper all over the ground. My lightning rod was melting!"

The ~~memory~~^{borrowed memory} of that horridly loud night made the quiet of this day -- no sound but the all-around hum of bees tending flowers -- ~~was~~ rather sinister. Beyond the deep, green valley of Deception Creek, ^{gleamed} a miles-wide sprawl of glaciers, ^{of} the Alaskan landscape ~~of~~ Mt. Daniels and Mt. Hinman. I remembered when the Alaskan landscape of Mt. Olympus, viewed from Lost Ridge the afternoon before the storm, ~~was~~ was swallowed by clouds so black one was forced to think of them as angry, evil.

"Do you see it?" he asked eagerly. He directed my eye to the ridge of Cathedral Rock. "Looks like a snag_x but in the firefinder you can tell it's three times taller than the trees on that ridge." I squinted through the firefinder, wasn't sure I was even looking at what he wanted me to.

He ^{half-whispered} ~~in hushed voice he said~~, "It wasn't there before the storm."

It was ~~high~~ time for me to be moving along. The lookout watched me out of sight, leaving him to the porcupines, the Japanese Empire, and a tower born in lightning, as were Boris Karloff and Elsa Lanchester.

At Surprise Gap, where the trail dropped left to our camp, I took a sidetrip right, down to Deception Lakes. Briefly I explored the shores, then started back ~~to~~ to the gap.

The trail didn't go up, it went down, toward the valley of Deception Creek. At a vista of ~~the~~ Alaskan scenery I stopped. The gap was ~~about~~ 180 degrees in the other direction.

I returned to the lake and took a trail that went 180 degrees the opposite direction from the first. It went down. To a vista of valley and Alaskan

scenery.

Back to the lake. Systematically study the maze of fishermen's paths ^{leading} to campsites and fishing holes. Eliminate them from consideration. Of the possible escape trails, take a third. Down. To a view of glaciers.

In broad daylight, under a blue sky and bright sun, sweat started on my brow, my heart raced, my head felt light. I sat on a rock to calm myself. There must be a simple, logical explanation. Which trail had brought me here? By now, they'd all brought me here. But none would let me leave, except to the valley.

I tried them all again, and again, until the ^{sight} of the glaciers brought cries of despair, the beginnings of a whimper. Back and forth I ran, a rat in a trap, soaked in sweat, gasping for breath, jittering in knee and jaw. Then the trail -- the identical trail I'd tried a dozen times -- turned uphill and I ran to the gap and fell to the heather, exhausted.

The lookout was crazy. So was I. ^{A sane} ~~an~~ atheist doesn't believe in all this crap.

HIGHER EDUCATION, AND LOWER

A little boy, finding himself alone, set out to explore the many rooms in his father's mansion. Entering the cavernous library, he stood awed by the books without number from floor to ceiling. He noted an impressively large volume on the top shelf and climbed a ladder to fetch it down. The cover announced that it contained All the Wisdom in the World. Eagerly he opened to the first page and there read, in bold black letters:

THERE ISN'T ANY SANTA CLAUS

His eyes opened wide in dismay. He turned to the next page to see:

FAIRY TALES ARE PURE FICTION

He paled and began to shiver. The next page told him:

FOR ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES
PIRATING, INDIAN-FIGHTING,
AND EXPLORING ARE DEAD

Tears flooded his eyes and sobs shook his body. Being a very poetic little raised boy he ~~lifted~~ his face to the ceiling, held out his arms, and cried, "Life! O life! You hold nothing for me!" Being a very practical little boy he went to his father's gun room, selected a pistol, and blew out his brains.

He doubtless would have been less hasty had he turned another leaf, there to see in flaming red letters:

WHEN YOU DIE
YOU ARE GOING
STRAIGHT TO HELL

THE WORMS SCREAM AT DAWN

I stumbled on the steps and fell headlong against the door. Mother never could open in time. I woke in a sweat, screaming.

The light of spring dawn flowed down from the alley into my basement cell. It was not night, it was day. Yet the walls and floor and ceiling, and the bed and desk and chair and lamp and textbooks were shaking in a noiseless earthquake -- galaxyquake -- cosmosquake. Formerly It always had hidden in the night, pretended to be simple blackness. Now It revealed Itself as the vibration of evil -- of all the little and big acts of evil committed since the beginning of time by devils and men. It was the spinning of electrons in the atoms, energized by the primeval force, moccasins. I

I ~~managed to~~ trembled into pants and shirt and ran up the steps, down the alley, and across 45th Street onto campus.

I'd ~~left~~ ^{moved away from} home weeks before. Mother and the deck of cards were miles distant.

After an absence of two years, the Pursuer had come out in the open.

The pressure once sensed against windows and walls and roof, now I felt against the soles of my moccasins, over my head in branches of the horse chestnut trees. It flamed from the dewdrops on the flowers, glowered from the eyes of robins in the grass, ^{their} ears cocked for the sounds of the squirmings of worms.

An hour of breathless walking ^{expelled} the pressure from my body, ^{into} pushed ^{it} deep inside trees and flowers and birds, [^] the bowels of the earth, the depths of the sky. I returned to my chill cell and slept another two hours before

the University chimes woke me to vacuum the parlor rug and sweep the front walk.

On the way to my eight o'clock class I walked the same route down the alley, across 45th, onto campus. All was as it had been, except the paths now were thronged by students for whom this was just another fine spring morning. As it was for the robins listening for worms. And for the worms.

UNCONSCIOUS INTERCOURSE

It wasn't possible -- it was ~~some species of~~ magic or enchantment -- to be in mountain meadows so quickly from the city, so easily, without ~~the~~ thousands of steps of boots on trail, ~~the~~ quarts of creek dumped in mouth and flushed out pores. It was ^{equally} impossible to ~~take~~ ^{take} thought that sure as death, night follows day.

The Model A, hot as a firecracker from steaming to a mile above sealevel, the radiator gulping the quarts of creek that I didn't, cooled and relaxed as it jounced along the ruts across the parkland shelf to my destination, the trail shelter that predated the ^{which was} relatively new road, by many years. Fog flowed through ~~through~~ clumps of subalpine trees, beaded the new-greening grass. A snowbank dribbled meltwater over a yellow splash of buttercups. Clothing not worn since the end of last summer -- boots and wool socks, wool pants and shirt and stocking cap -- felt homey. Kitchen chores -- gathering wood, kindling a fire, heating a can of stew and boiling up a Ten Can of coffee -- came easy and friendly.

The gray day darkened to ~~black~~ black night. The circle of campfire light brightened. No river was near, no wind stirred. The mists muffled all ~~the~~ sounds except the occasional THUMP THUMP THUMP -- alertly identified as normal and proper for Deer Park. The cabin's three walls and roof defended my rear, leaving only the open front to be guarded.

Nevertheless, a person unable to sleep alone in a house without ^{the} ~~plenty of~~ lights turned on was -- for the first time -- alone in a mountain night.

I hadn't foreseen it. Couldn't escape it. The previous night, camped at Sequim Bay, I'd broken my glasses. I barely was able~~x~~ in daytime~~x~~ to drive up the steep and twisty road sliced in the side of the mountain. I'd never make it down ~~at night~~ in the dark.

A magma of panic, hysteria, insanity threatened to erupt. I fought to keep a cork in the volcano. I focused on the life of the fire -- the snaps, crackles, pops, and small screams -- the temperature zones from the black outer charcoal inward through dull red to bright orange to the yellow-white-hot center where the most depraved souls were dancing. Sleep came incredibly easy. First the nodding off to short naps sitting, then lying, on a bench by the fire, then stumbling half-conscious to a bunk, sinking in so deep that the Thumpers entered the cabin and masticated my wool socks to suck out the ~~the other~~ ~~sweating~~ and I never heard a thing.

In the morning I set out to climb Blue Mountain. Now, in the day, I entertained thoughts prudently excluded from the night, ~~the~~

Eyes intent on the fire had been peripherally aware that the shapes at the edge of the light were other than merely trees. What? Ascending in ~~the~~ insubstantial mists, ahead of me I saw subalpine cones emerge from nullity to ~~the~~ reality; behind me they as quickly dissolved -- in a single moment~~x~~ ~~the~~, were simultaneously material, and ideal, and zero.

Was the Fog, too, something other and more? Was the Night? Certainly the Storm had been, the July day three years before, when our gang of Scouts, headed for this very Deer Park, was chased back along Lost Ridge by the wind blowing cold rain sideways through our thin clothing, deep into our skin, diluting and chilling our blood.

Were the Powers assembled here -- Trees, Fog, Night -- as hostile as the Storm? Or were They simply being, indifferent to me, even unaware of me?

I live not in myself, but I become
 Portion of that around me, and to me
 High mountains are a feeling, but the hum
 Of human cities torture...

One afternoon I'd been in the city. The next, by Model A magic, I'd been transported to mountain meadows. Soon thereafter, through no human action or intent, I'd been immersed in mountain night.

To sleep in a basement cell with a window view upward to garbage cans is not natural; to sleep in the open air, breathing fog, is. To don a white jacket and serve dinner to forty girls and a housemother is not natural; to dip snowmelt from a field of buttercups, boil coffee on a campfire, is. Briefly, very briefly, has a tiny fraction of humanity lived by city ways. For most human beings and years, human days and nights, Deer Park has been the life.

In the city a person may be robbed or murdered, arrested or run over by a truck, burned up or electrocuted, fired from a job or thrown in a crazy house. There are many city fears, the worse because they are, in the perspective of the human eons, too new for the subconscious to have installed reflexive, instinctive defenses. Amid so much of the city-new, only children are permitted the wildland-old; for an adult to be afraid of the dark is shameful.

At Deer Park the new fears were absent. The fears proper to the place were the old ones, the natural ones. Fear of the mountain night was homey. Therefore I stayed a second night, warily.

In morning I again climbed the mountain. The fog parted in two layers, in sky and valley, sandwiching a view to The Needles. An August day four years before, climbing

to Deception Basin, we had walked beneath those spires. The existence of the Mystery Glacier, an enormous chunk of ice ~~surviving~~ in the summer sun, had been truly a mystery. Mt. Deception was so tall that to look at the summit I had had to bend my neck ~~so far back~~ ^{so far back} nearly I/fell over, .

...The Palaces of Nature, whose vast walls
Have pinnacled in clouds their snowy scalps,
And throned Eternity in icy halls
Of cold Sublimity...
All that expands the spirit, yet appals,
Gather around these summits, as to show
How Earth may pierce to Heaven...

Beside such Powers as The Needles the spires of the city were as puny as a little boy's pecker.

I roamed this way and that in the fog of the green mountainside, down into swales, up onto knolls, my boots caressing a soft and gentle and sweet Earth that was a Power ~~beyond~~ ^{more than} all the Others.

I held unconscious intercourse with beauty
Old as creation...

I ran up on the knolls, down in the swales, sensing

Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
Of undistinguishable motion, steps
Almost as silent as the turf they trod...

OCKHAM'S RAZOR

The red-faced Christian boy bounced up and down in his chair and the damp-eyed Christian girl leaned forward on the edge of hers as Descartes, reasoning methodically toward cogito ergo sum, speculated that the God to whom we prayed might really be the Devil (and how could anyone know?), and as Hume, watching billiard balls bouncing around the table, saw only contiguous consecutive motions, never one motion causing another (and saw stars bouncing around the sky and never a First Cause).

The Christians declared their firm belief there was a God in Heaven. The professor declared his firm belief there was an oil can on the other side of the Moon. The boy began shouting. The girl burst into tears, ~~and fell out of her chair~~
~~and fell out of her chair~~

It was grand, simply grand. My atheism scorned the University children who couldn't grow up, who needed a Big Daddy forever, who would sulk through life unless promised ice cream and cake afterward. Howling Christian boy! Weeping Christian girl! Jesus riding a donkey side-saddle!

The professor pointed to a chair -- to another chair -- described a dozen markedly different chairs he'd recently sat in. What did they have in common? Chairness! He pointed to a nose here, a nose there, a Christian nose, my atheist nose, his own academic nose. Noseness! He held up a sheet of white paper, a piece of chalk, pointed out the window -- past the gray squirrel perched on a maple branch, peering in the window for cookies -- to a billowing cloud. Whiteness! And treeness, squirrelness, grayness, cookiness! What did they

have in common? Nessness! THE ONE!

The Christian boy and girl turned eyes smugly upward. My eyes slitted. Was the professor a malignant deceiver trying to trick me back to the little brown church in the wildwood?

Where, the professor asked, is whiteness? Where is color? Where is music? In the chemical reactions, the excitations of air and ether, the snap-crackle of electricity in eye and ear and brain? Absurd! There is no Degas dancer on the painter's palette or in the chemical factory. There is no Mozart symphony in the instruments of the orchestra or the atmospheric disturbances they create. Is the dancer kicking up her heels inside the eyeball? Are the violins sawing away behind the ear lobes? Where are they, then? In the mind? Very well, where is that?

Since the revelation of The Mysterious Stranger I had been ~~composed~~ composed solely of matter. Now, though still consisting of flesh and blood and bones and nothing more, I was permitted to have a soul as serenely immaterial and immortal as whiteness. I didn't have to go to church for it, didn't have to accept two orders of reality -- ours down here and the good one in the sky. A single order could equally well accommodate flowers and ^suspects and pretty girls. It even had room for a God, if It agreed not to violate the laws of nature with silly little show-off miracles.

I could worship any number of gods, or Gods, could be a god myself, so long as they, and I, obeyed the Rule of Parsimony.

THE RATIONAL MOUSE

"Goodbye," said the ^{Father} ~~side~~ of the Rational Mouse. "Stay close to ^{Mother} ~~me~~,"

"Where are you going, ^{Father} ~~me~~?" asked the Rational Mouse.

"I am going to get some cheese, because cheese is very nourishing,"
replied Father.

The Rational Mouse, his Older Brother, and his Mother awaited their provider's return with cheese. He did not return with cheese. He did not return at all. Presently Mother began to fret and went in search of Father, the Rational Mouse and Older Brother flitting along behind. It was the Rational Mouse's first excursion into the world and he was very humble.

In a corner of the kitchen they found Father, his teeth sunk in a piece of cheese, his neck and shoulders crushed in the steel arm of a trap.

"That's Life," said Mother stoically.

"That's Life?" repeated the Rational Mouse, wondering.

"Yes, son, that's Life," said Mother.

Mother commenced to explore the kitchen for food, since the hunger of the survivors remained alive though Father did not. Finding ~~nothing~~^{ing} on the floor, she prepared to spring up onto the pantry shelf, where a slice of bread lay exposed.

"Where are you going, Mother?" asked the Rational Mouse.

"I am going to get some bread, because bread is very nourishing,"
answered Mother.

Mother, arriving at the slice of bread, observed there was plenty, so before leaping to her waiting children indulged in a small snack.

As she was about to portion the food to the two hungry brothers, her eyes began to bulge and her whiskers to twitch.

"Poison," she gasped, and rolled over dead.

"That's Life," said Older Brother sadly.

"That's Life?" repeated the Rational Mouse, wondering.

"Yes, that's Life," said Older Brother.

The two orphans were now very hungry. Older Brother searched the kitchen. There was nothing. Through a door, however, was a dining room table with a fruit bowl. Older Brother scampered toward this windfall.

"Where are you going?" asked the Rational Mouse.

"I am going to get some fruit, because fruit is very nourishing," replied Older Brother.

But Older Brother got no closer than the dining room door before a dark form from the shadows pounced upon him. Older Brother shrieked once and was gobbled up by the Cat.

"That's Life," said the Cat, licking his chops and studying the Rational Mouse's haunches.

"That's Life?" repeated the Rational Mouse, wondering.

"Yes," said the Cat, a bland smile in his yellow eyes, "That's Life."

The Cat's leap missed by so little the Rational Mouse was slashed on the rump. Panic-stricken, he circled the kitchen wildly several times before collecting himself enough to dart into his family's hole. It took many minutes for his little heart to slow enough for him to think clearly.

"Goodness," pondered the Rational Mouse. "So that's Life. Father sought cheese, because cheese is nourishing, and he died. Mother sought bread, because bread is nourishing, and she died. Older Brother sought fruit, because fruit is nourishing, and he died. The Nourishing is very, very dangerous. It gets you crushed in a trap, or poisoned, or gobbled up by the Cat."

Delighted at his luck in discovering the Facts of Life before it was too late, the Rational Mouse sank by degrees into apathy, ^{then} stupor, ^{then} ~~and~~ coma, and by and by starved to death.

THE BISHOP'S BED

"You've a cherubic look," smirked the professor of English who kept a little theater on the side, "How would you feel about holy orders?"

Campus was lonesome in the long ~~vacancy~~^{interim} between spring and summer terms occasioned by the University's transition from the quarter system of peacetime to the trimesters requested^{inserted} by the military. I was hanging around Parrington Hall because I had no place else to go and nobody to go with. The professor introduced me to Don, who'd already taken vows. He seemed a person worth getting to know.

He and I shared (with a third actor, a high school kid, nephew of a cousin of the professor) a joint role, a small one. Early in the first act we three visiting ministers were escorted by a religious lady on a tour of the bishop's bedroom. We reverently viewed the bishop's fireplace ("oo, ah"), the bishop's easy chair (ditto), the bishop's tea pot and its lovely cozy (again, twice), and (pull out all stops) the curtained sanctuary of the bishop's bed. Our next entry was in company of the full cast late in the third act, when a girl in undies was discovered in the bishop's bed ("AH! OO!").

Don and I spent the interval between our appearances in an upstairs apartment, empty for the moment, using it as our dressing room. We discussed poetry, novels, plays, music, art, philosophy, our lives and ~~bad~~^{bad} times -- and good. I told him about the wildness of the high mountains. He told me about the wildness of being high on the blood-red wine. Raised in a liquor-free home and now, nearing nineteen, easily able to pass for fifteen, in a state where the legal age was twenty-one and the University District was infested with

undercover Liquor Board agents who kept tavern owners in terror of a ticket, three of which meant loss of license, I ~~left~~^{leaped} at the chance to explore a new frontier.

On the appointed evening we met at the dressing room early, Don with a fifth of burgundy in hand. At first cue we descended to the theater and put unprecedented sparkle in our "oo-ing" and "ah-ing." Returned upstairs, we discovered we'd emptied the bottle without noticing. The summer twilight was trembling on the brink of wonders. Another bottle would ~~do it~~^{carry us over}. However, a state law emanating from the same parental prudence which ringed the campus with churches to catch any ~~stray~~ lamb who might try to go astray, banned the sale of liquor within easy walking distance of campus. We'd have to run.

School being out, the sidewalks of University Way -- "the Avenue, ~~the~~" -- were empty of students, thronged instead by older folks, the Friday-night promenaders who on Sunday mornings filled all those churches. We took polite care in our haste to thread through the elders without jostling. Nevertheless, we noted a remarkable lot of staring, considerable gaping, and even some stopping dead in tracks. Evidently these good people often had seen college students running, but rarely if ever sober black suits and clerical collars. When an old woman gave a little cry and fell against her frail husband, who would have gone down had he not staggered against a building, it occurred to us they'd doubtless never seen ~~any~~ ministers in eyebrow darkener, mascara, lipstick, pancake makeup, and just a touch of rouge. We began giggling as we ran and all along the Avenue old ladies were crying and falling against frail husbands who were staggering against buildings. The tavern, boisterous as ~~we~~ we approached, fell silent when Don ran in ~~the door~~ waving greenbacks at

the bartender, ~~got his attention while I waited on the sidewalk, hands clasped~~

In the apartment we were reflecting that this was the sort of thing that brought on the Reformation when the stage manager burst through the door and herded us down the steps. We erupted on stage, there joining the high school kid. He had a hysterical fit. The hero fluffed his lines and stood glowering ~~there~~ in speechless rage. The cast was paralyzed, mute. Don brightly stepped forward and ingeniously extemporized a bridge back to the script. Nobody thanked him. The curtains of the bishop's bed were drawn to reveal the girl in undies. The three ministers (the kid following our example) threw hands in the air and wiggled fingers and cried "WOW-EE! WA-HOO!"

The girl fell and ^{her} head. The lights blinked out to indicate she was unconscious and ~~turned~~ quickly ^{back} on to indicate she was now dreaming. The crazy business included the ministers jumping up on chairs and moaning "Dear me! Dear me!" When I jumped I went right on over ^{the chair} and onto the floor. Don leaned ^{down} to give me a hand and fell on top of me. The kid yelled "WHOOPEE!"

The dream ended in a second blackout, a long one during which all of us except the girl (in undies) and the hero filed off. We'd rehearsed the maneuver repeatedly -- as was essential because the tiny stage had a single narrow entry, a bottleneck at best.

We'd rehearsed in total darkness but never with a minister on hands and knees, the only way ^{a person in my condition could} ~~manage to~~ travel in total darkness. Wherever I crept, other actors went down ^{like} forest trees in a high wind.

Thus far in the run of the play the audiences -- friends and relatives of the playwright and the professor -- had clapped a polite minimum and faked an occasional smile. This night's bunch didn't know what the unseen shuffling and thumping were all about but seemed satisfied they were getting their money's worth.

Invigorated by the laughter, I commenced grabbing ankles, with such excellent results ("JESUS CHRIST!") that on the nicer-feeling ones I went for the knees ("GOD DAMN YOU!"). The religious dialogue got louder and more vivid. The stage manager arrived with a flashlight. Caught in the spot and yanked to my feet, I received a thunderous ovation. The professor and playwright and hero and heroine were furious. The rest of the run the stage manager wouldn't let me go on stage without first breathing in his face. The actor who played the comical Irish cop confided ^{in brogue} ~~in me~~, "Personally, I think they should have kept ~~it~~ in."

THE UNINVITED

Ghosts are drawn to people who are "open," ~~to them~~. They favor solitary persons, for the easier pickings. Historically, however, spirits in a fullness of power ^{on occasion} have manifested themselves to entire villages or ships' companies or armies. My most terrifying encounter was in a jam-packed movie theater.

The University was between terms, Jim the sole occupant of his sorority house, I of mine. This seemed of no significance as we walked the Avenue to the Egyptian. Both of us were old enough to have been called up and thrown back by the military. We were long since thoroughly accustomed to being alone in the dark.

With the opening of the stage curtains and the appearance of the title on the screen, the audience instantly and simultaneously and un^{animously} realized the theater was haunted. Nervous giggles rippled through the dark, punctuated by "eeks!" when ribs were accidentally nudged by an elbow (or something) or hair was brushed by a hand (or something). Seeing the fatal house, near (too near) the brink of the sea cliff, the surf viciously (sentiently) battering the base, we hundreds emitted in unison a despairing "ah-ah!" and drew in feet and hunched shoulders to present minimum targets.

Ignoring our gasps and moans, the hero and heroine climbed the stairs to inspect the attic bedroom. (Everybody knows that in a ghost story one should never go down to the basement or up to the attic.) They remarked on the odd chill in the air despite the bright sun. We yearned to warn them: "Get out of that room! Go back to London! Emigrate!" They turned to leave and failed to see

what we did: the flower accidentally dropped by the heroine wilted before our eyes.

Over the following forty years ^{I've} viewed the film a half-dozen more times. Eventually I ~~was~~ ^{became} able to keep calm enough to follow the clues and discover that there were two ghosts -- one thought to be the mother of the heroine and assumed by her to be good but actually intent on killing her, and the other, the true mother trying to save her daughter. On that first experience, however, I was submerged with all the others in mob hysteria, helplessly disoriented by the inconsistency and unpredictability of The Uninvited. Every action by anybody, every event of any kind, and every new character, every change in camera angle, every cutaway to a different scene was alarming. In the climactic moment, when the double doors of the drawing room burst open in a sudden, horrifying wind and we stared into the dark corridor, straining to see it, I completely failed to catch the key clue -- the wind turning pages of a family album to an old photograph which solved the puzzle. Who could think while participating in a mass shriek from hundreds of throats?

The movie had a peaceful ending. Life isn't that easy.

Jim and I and the limp hundreds emerged on the Avenue exchanging weak smiles, as of the passengers who survived the Titanic, the Pompeians who escaped Vesuvius. The two of us walked north on the brightly lit Avenue, turned off on dark 47th Street.

Freaking at shadows, frightening at cats, we came to the place of parting, he to his empty sorority house, I to mine. We couldn't do it. My sorority ~~house~~ being classier than his, we went there. My basement room had just one

bed, as did every other room in the house except the sleeping porch, where the mattresses were out for cleaning. We took adjoining rooms on the second floor. These were used mainly as dressing rooms, two girls apiece, but each had a single bed for such girls as couldn't abide night sounds of the porch. The situation was less than ideal, each of us alone and essentially defenseless. Yet when I felt myself becoming too open, I could knock on the wall and call, "Jim, you okay?" He could answer, "Yeah, I'm okay. You okay?"

In the morning we walked down the Avenue to the Greek's for waffles and little pig sausages and coffee. Watching drops of sweat fall from John's forehead onto the griddle, giving the little pigs their famous flavor, we speculated on how the hundreds of others had got through the night -- how many girls had lost their virginity, and how many boys.

MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE: ADONAI

When shall we three meet again
 In thunder, lightning, or in rain?
 When the hurlyburly's done,
 When the battle's lost and won.
 That will be ere set of sun.
 Where the place? Upon the heath,
 There to meet old man Macbeeth...

Senior year at Lincoln High the teacher on lunchroom ~~_____~~ duty usually came to the smart boy's table along about the set of sun to ask me to hold it down. Poetry, spoilt for me by George Herbert, was redeemed by Shakespeare. One ~~_____~~ ^{quality} of poems ~~_____~~ ^{I particularly liked} was that many were very short, permitting a lot of literary history to be covered in a hurry. At the University, in the ~~three-quarter~~ ^{year-long} Survey of English Literature, we made excellent speed from Beowulf to Blake. Then, spring quarter, a new professor ushered us into Wordsworth's Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey. I expected a quick tour; there were only 159 of the lines. Days later we were still there, spending ~~_____~~ ^{as much as an hour} on a single line, ~~_____~~.

Escaped at last, I had to admit the stay had been well worth it. Arrived at Shelley, I settled down contentedly for days of:

I weep for Adonais -- he is dead!
 Oh, weep for Adonais! though our tears
 Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head!

^{Zillman}
 Professor [^] devoted many class hours to the poem. I put in more on my

own.

He is made one with Nature: there is heard
 His voice in all her music; from the moan
 Of thunder, to the song of night's sweet bird...

Each and every line and syllable, ^{finally} explicated ~~at last~~ to a faretheewell,
 I sat down in Parrington Library one morning to luxuriate in reading all
 fifty-five Spenserian stanzas at a single go. The storm that had raged ^{in the} ~~at~~ night
 was only now blowing itself out. Winds still were blustering ~~in~~ from the southwest,
 tearing the clouds to tatters, flinging the fragments ~~northward~~ close above the
 campus trees, letting through glimpses of blinding-white billows on high in the
 intensely-blue sky. As I sat at the library table reciting the poem (soundlessly)
 aloud, the corners of my eyes looked out the windows to the greens and the
 whites and the blue. These didn't distract from ^{the} poem, became part of it.

The One remains, the many change and pass:
 Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly...

Without knowing how I got there, I was out in the clouds and the sky,
 moving over the campus not on legs but the wind, through the Greenness and
 Blueness and Whiteness.

I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar;
 Whilst, burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,
 The soul of Adonais, like a star,
 Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE: THE SNOW MAIDEN AND THE REBEL GIRLS

At midnight I looked out the window to snowflakes falling. I went walking deserted streets of the University District to see the restoration of virginity to the soiled city.

Could these millions of falling flakes be counted? Was any number large enough? Was this not infinity made visible? They touched my cheek as gently as loving fingertips. I longed to hold that hand in mine, the two of us walking within the Whiteness of Plato, a union of chaste spirits, the purity of the snow maiden guaranteeing mine.

By morning the snow had melted without a trace. I studied corporeal girls on campus, speculating which were pure, which not. Which sort was preferable? Writers I was now reading preached that Man's way to the Infinite lay through the body of Woman, and vice versa, that when two halves formed a whole they would "feel the earth move." The snow maiden was ennobling to contemplate, but there was no denying ~~that~~ she was cold comfort in a lonesome bed.

In political science I met three girls ~~who~~ who astonished me by giving every indication they lusted for my body, ~~all three at once~~. I accepted their invitations to meetings where the speakers disagreed over what Trotsky's position on this matter or that would be were he still alive but everyone shared contempt for capitalist morality. My only problem was deciding which girl to go after first. Scouting the terrain a bit closer, I discovered to my chagrin they ~~■~~ were as rigidly married as a pack of Baptists. They wanted my body all right, for the barricades.

MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE: THE NECTAR OF THE GODS

The question arose, what would happen if an ordinary civilian, not wearing a tin hat and official armband, pulled the handle at the base of the billboard, signed "Blackout Switch"?

What happened was that one moment Don and I were drowning in floodlights and the next were breathing freely in pitchy blackness. The result at the second billboard was identical, and the third. We careered ^{onward} along Eastlake Avenue, and it was as if we had been granted the power to extinguish the brutal Sun and award dominion to the sweet Moon.

Wine had ~~met~~ ^{failed to meet} all my expectations. It was not delicious beyond compare, better than a pineapple milkshake; the taste was more disagreeable than not. The popping of a cork did not attract a bevy of girls, each more nubile and willing than the last; such girls as were encountered as often as not seemed to be downright disgusted. However, if you could gag it down and forget about girls, the spirit truly did expand toward godlike dimensions, the brain quickened beyond simple smartness toward genius.

The University Bridge was the end of the billboards. There we also emptied the jug, dropped it over the railing, and gazed down to the "ker-splash!" in Lake Union and the neon writhings of red serpents, green serpents, blue serpents, and the silvery serpents dancing by the light of the Moon.

Don wasn't feeling too well. In ~~saying~~ ^{telling me} so, he made a great little couplet, ~~adding~~ ^{adding} a third line ~~that~~ I found truly moving. I ~~improvised~~ ^{improvised} ~~three~~ ^{more} lines and pulled out paper and pencil to preserve the poem for posterity.

Don leaned over the railing and from the lake came another sound of splashing.

In morning, ^{though} the burgundy was sour in my mouth and stomach, ~~the fumes~~
~~clouded my eyes. For all that~~ I ransacked my pockets to find the scrap of
 paper, ^{dreams} ~~thoughts~~ of anthologies dancing in my head. I read:

I wanna go to bed
 And pull the covers o'er my head
 And then I wanna heave a deep, deep sigh.
 I wanna go to bed
 Because I know I'll soon be dead
 And -- God! -- I gotta have some fun before I die.

MYSTICAL AMBIGUITY

The nurse laughed when I gave due humorous warning, telling of the last time I'd taken gas, eight years before -- the squirmings and thrashings, the summoning of reinforcements from up and down the hospital corridor. She wasn't laughing when I came out of it. Cap on floor and hair awry and the ~~two~~ top buttons missing from her dress, she (and the dentist and their reinforcements) ^{greeted} ~~greeted~~ with very glum expressions ~~my~~ my exultant yelp, "That was wonderful!"

I'd sunk into the mists submissively, more excited than afraid, and was surprised to learn, afterward, I'd been so physical. For me the experience had been violent ~~in its impact~~ solely for the mind, ~~not the body.~~ My brain was going a mile a minute, ^{I was} smarter than I'd ever been, smarter than anybody ever had been. A philosophical question was posed -- I answered just-like-that. Another question -- another answer. Questions-answers -- click-click. Thales was puzzled -- I cleared things up for him. Plato knit his brows -- and gravely nodded to hear me. They were not present as persons, of course, but as minds quizzing my mind. Lucretius, Ockham, Aquinas, Descartes, Hume, Spinoza, Kant, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Whitehead, Russell -- none ~~of the usual~~ could stump me.

The difficulty that developed was that as fast as I ticked off an answer another question came at me as on a conveyor belt, pushed from behind by the impatient next, by an infinite line, tick tick tick. A cosmic clock was counting the time remaining for me to get the job done -- ticking off eternity millenia, by the ~~centuries~~ the centuries, the years, the days, the minutes, the seconds.

The clock stopped! I died! ETERNITY ENDED!

In absolute silence and perfect calm I stood within a serene brilliance at the foot of the Shining White Throne, dead as a doornail, happy as a clam.

I hastened to Dr. Phillips' office to reveal to him that the solutions to all the problems of philosophy lay in the extraction of a wisdom tooth. He laughed, ~~he said~~. ^{graduate student} Every ~~philosophy major~~ knew that. The arguments started when revelations were compared. ~~Every~~ ~~philosophy major~~ ~~was~~ ~~convinced~~ ~~that~~ ~~the~~ ~~world~~ ~~was~~ ~~evil~~. ~~For~~ ~~example~~, I had met the One and It was Good. But Dr. Phillips' best friend in graduate school had awakened from the struggle being soothed by the nurse, saying "It's all right, everything is going to be all right." But within the gas he had seen that each and every star and planet, ocean and mountain, person and dog, cat and bird, tree and flower, grain of sand and drop of rain, and molecule and atom and proton and electron ^{WAS} ~~is~~ purely evil. No matter what the nurse said, he knew nothing ever would be all right again.

THE TERRIBLE LOUD WIND

The forest floor was barely a week or two melted free of snow, the duff was saturated with icewater that quickly soaked through my pants and anesthetized my butt, and were I to sit much longer my blood ~~also~~ would be the temperature of winter.

The adventure of the trip didn't stir me. I'd rather have been snug in a city bed. I was here because I'd nowhere else to go. ~~I was sitting because I didn't want to go.~~ All through a long night I'd walked city streets, watching over my shoulder for pursuit. In morning I'd caught the first ferry, driven the Model A through Hood Canal's springtime, the season of re-birth and hope, then turned up the valley of the Dosewallips River, and at the road-end had hoisted Trapper Nelson and hiked back ^{through time} into winter, ~~the season of lifeless terror.~~ Clouds pregnant with snowflakes hung stagnant in tree tops, the dark air was still as a tomb, and I was frozen in it, as a fish trapped in lake ice.

And yet, beside me a seedling hemlock danced in a gale.

I felt no breeze on my cheek. I passed fingers slowly between the inch-high sprig and the direction the wind was coming from -- nothing. I tented the sprig with my hands. It danced wildly on. Science is the sum of what we can explain. The remainder is -- God? And/or the Devil?

Nine miles from the road I dropped the Trapper at Camp Marion and gazed around in dismay. Six years before, when we arrived herefrom Lost Ridge, the tall trees had been kindly shelter from the storm; now they ringed me like so

many teachers scowling down on a first-grader caught in an accident. I'd been secure within the Scout gang, then; now my Model A was the sole car parked at Constance Creek, I was the solitary human in the Dosewallips valley. Then, I was a regular at Sunday School, ~~absolutely~~ worried whether I'd enjoy Heaven; now I had joined up with the Devil and the worst of it was I didn't believe in Him.

Camp chores cheered me ~~up~~ some, busied my mind. Combustible wood was scarce amid the snowpatches, ~~and~~ the first flames took a lot of nursing. The canned stew was tasty, the bread and butter delicious -- I hadn't eaten in thirty-odd hours, except a few peanuts with the beer, before the street-walking.

Supper over, dusk deepening, my choices were two. I could look inward -- to a messy ~~landscape~~ soulscape, the reason I was here. I could look outward -- sides, to a night pressing as heavily on my back, my ~~forehead~~ and the top of my head as it used to on the windows of our house while Mother and I played casino. I piled wood on the fire to push back the blackness. Leaping flames set the shadows of the night to dancing as wildly and fearfully as the seedling hemlock.

The Dosewallips River bellowed with snowmelt. Within its great voice were lesser ones. I strained to make them out -- murmurs and mumbles -- now and then a word -- my name -- they spoke my name -- chuckles and cackles and giggles, horrible.

Footfalls woke me -- thud-thud-thud. I jerked upright in my sleeping bag. At the edge of firelight loomed the Pursuer -- I screamed -- the fire blinked out -- I awoke in total blackness. Heart pounding, breath coming in gasps, I raked the ashes, blew a coal to life, heaped on tiny wood and little wood and

big wood and slept no more, swiveling my head like an owl's to keep watch on the dance of darkness. The river voices were on the march. The sergeant counted cadence: "Hup! Hoo! Hee! Hor!"

In the broad light of day there was none of that, nothing to unsettle the nerves of a fellow a scant month short of being able to vote and to legally purchase wine, beer, gin, rum, whiskey, or any other nectar brewed or distilled by the gods to let sinners sin without anguish.

I needed no other medicine at Camp Marion than the purgative night. The wilderness had cured my city ills.

That was why I didn't run when I had the chance, why I spent a second night at Marion. The Pursuer didn't return. How could ~~he~~^{It}? Not for two consecutive minutes between dusk and dawn were my eyes closed. In the bleary dawn I lay in my sleeping bag surrounded by a myriad dancings of twigs in unfelt gales. A squirrel skittered up to me -- a friend in need, a friend indeed, someone to talk to. It listened a minute, stole my last sugar cookie, and ran away. The winds roared inside my ears.

Again, the bread day. Again the bravery. Surely, two such ordeals by night had permanently tempered my spirit. Again the fatal dimming.

The thudding of my boots on the trail drowned out the river. All the more easily I caught the small thuddings intermingled with mine. I cast a look over my shoulder. They dove in the bushes. I hiked on. They fell in behind. They were in no hurry. It was nine miles to Constance Creek.

I made out the shape of the Model A in the murk and broke into a run, thinking "Mother! Mother!" I stumbled, nearly fell. The wind, ~~ran~~^{the wind!} ~~the~~ I tore open the door, threw in the Trapper, left behind the wheel, stepped on the starter. Bless the battery, it was up. If I'd had to crank they'd have got me for sure.

THE BLACK CLOUD

Arild and I hadn't quite managed to kill ourselves yesterday, crossing the divide from the Dosewallips River to headwaters of the Greywolf. I'd come closest, getting up enough speed ^{sliding down} on a snowfield to continue the glissade a hundred feet beyond the end of the snow, on the rocks. We'd also not committed suicide this morning, having sense enough -- almost too late -- to retreat from the cliff dropping into the chasm ^{beneath} ~~below~~ The Needles. These green towers had pursued us through the afternoon as we fled through snow, brush, and meltwater torrents. They'd not let loose of us yet. We still had to find a way around them, tomorrow. ~~Either that or give the Greywolf Dosewallips divide another crack at our asses.~~

In late afternoon we broke free of forest to a little circle of bright sky. A creek had been dammed by a landslip_x not too recently in the geologic past, the lakelet half-filled by a delta fan. A tiny pile of leached charcoal in the gravel suggested we were the second party to camp here in recent geologic time. We were miles ^{and days} ~~away~~ from the security our ancestors had attained millenia before, when they invented dwellings with doors sturdy enough to keep out the cave bears.

We were cheerful beneath our circle of sky, cooking supper. Seasoned wood was so plentiful that when sunset colors faded we maintained our own day, illuminating delta and lakelet, pushing the night deep into the trees. Drinking a Ten Can of coffee that grew blacker by the hour, we swapped war stories -- his from the Pacific, mine from the University -- and exchanged memories of Lincoln High. What we didn't discuss was tomorrow -- finding a

way around the damnable greencrags, over Greywolf Ridge, down to Roy Creek and the safe trail back to the Dosewallips and the Model A.

I'd spread my sleeping bag in a pocket of sand by the lake. Arild had chosen the soft duff of the forest at the edge of the delta. I crawled in drowsy. But didn't fall asleep. City lights flatten out the sky, rob it of depth. How long since I'd seen a three-dimensional sky? Had I ^{ever} ~~^~~ since being jolted awake by stars bursting through the window of the Plymouth -- gazed this deeply into the blackness beyond the stars?

I could do it, now. That came of having learned not to count higher than a million billion. As T.S. Eliot said, "The rest is not our business."

A black speck ^{materialized in} ~~blotted out a bit of~~ the Milky Way.

It grew.

It exploded!

The black cloud ^{obliterated the Milky Way!} ~~sprawled simultaneously toward every horizon.~~

It had wings!

They slid by, the stars reappeared, my heart and lungs calmed.

I was okay. But my eye, following its passage over me, had seen where it was headed. Should I give a yell, ask Arild if he was okay? What if he weren't?

TOO CLOSE

The previous year Monie had inveigled us almost, but not quite, to the false summit of Cruiser Peak. This time Betty refused ~~even~~ to hike to the basecamp. She took the train to Portland to wait at her folks' home. I ~~send~~ ^{promised to} send her a telegram Sunday night, if I could.

A month earlier, in August, we'd let Monie cajole us up the South Face of The Tooth, a hoary Mountaineer joke. The route is composed of buckets and doorknobs the most jittering foot or palsied hand can step in or grasp. The belays are so bombproof the prankster can protect his/her victims even if they faint from fright. I didn't, quite. Betty didn't, either, but she was satisfied. Not me. As a person screamsthrough a rollercoaster ride and immediately gets in line for another, I badgered Monie to finish last year's joke.

She didn't grin and cackle about Cruiser, as she had the year before. She revealed, now, that her intent, then, had been solely to get us to the false summit to watch us shriek and collapse on seeing the final peak. The final peak -- she made very clear -- was not funny.

This was a surprise. During the year since Betty and I ^{had} refused to climb the last hundred feet to the false summit, thus failing to see the final peak, Monie's joy had been telling about her two ascents of the demonically phallic -- or phallicly demonic -- basalt tower in the southern Olympics. The first was particularly hilarious. Her party of three three-person teams had scrambled along the ridge from the false summit to a rock nook at the foot of the tower. They took the obvious route from there, around the corner onto a very steep

face. From a distance the face had appeared to be a flawless slab. Hands on, it proved to be composed of knobby pillow lava, the holds plentiful and large -- but pillow-round, nothing ^{to} ~~A~~ wedge a foot in or clutch with fingers. A climber stayed on the mountain purely by downpressure friction of soles and palms, never a moment to relax. There were no ledges for belay stances, no cracks for pitons. The slab was more than a rope length from bottom to top, which meant the entire team had to be out on it at once -- unbelayed -- a slip by any of the three taking them all to the valley. The top of the slab ~~was~~ ^{formed} the crest of the summit ridge, well-broken, a simple clamber, though thin as the blade of a knife, airy to the ~~brink~~ ^{point} of giddiness. The cream of the jest was that the first ^s ~~two~~ teams had to proceed beyond the summit to make room on top for the third. What with the coming up and going down by the second and third teams, the first team spent hours clasping the knife blade with both knees and both hands. A member of that team returned at ^{long} ~~A~~ last to the top of the slab, took one look down, went limp, and had to be lowered like a sack of potatoes.

Her second ascent wasn't as amusing because the party brought more ropes and climbed in two-person teams, permitting the top man to attain the upper belay at the top of the slab while the bottom man was still on belay below. The lower belay wasn't worth much, of course. Once the team leader was more than a few feet up the slab, in a fall the 7/16-inch manila rope would be sliced in two by the boulders against which the belayer's feet were ~~wedged~~ ^{braced}. The leader would proceed to the valley, the consolation being that the belayer would be left holding a frayed rope-end and ^{would} ~~A~~ not have to follow the leader. The best part of this ascent was that on the descent the leader of the party, rear-guarding, had

turned into a sack of potatoes and abandoned a spare rope on the mountain, tied to a splinter on the knife edge, to calm his nerves as he lowered himself from pillow to pillow.

No more than ~~when~~ ^{while} getting on ~~the~~ ^a rollercoaster did I examine my reasons for wanting Cruiser. Had Monie told me her reasons for a third ascent, I wouldn't have gone.

At the base of the tower she positioned me in a sitting hip belay ~~wedged~~ among ^{the} boulders, climbed around the corner, out of sight, onto the slab, and I didn't see her for an hour. Occasionally the rope tugged and I let out slack, several inches. Once it stopped dead for fifteen minutes. I lit a cigarette, smelled cooking flesh, looked down to see the burning coal against the back of my hand. I felt no pain.

The call came, "Belay on! Climb!" My ascent went very rapidly, a half-hour up and down, including ten minutes on the summit, all I wanted. I had just two bad moments -- very bad ~~one~~ my first look up the slab from the bottom_x and my first look down the slab from the top. For the rest of it the rope from above was my faith, my prayer, my church.

On her earlier ascents Monie had had an upper rope. This time, not. On the hike out she explained that where she'd stopped motionless for fifteen minutes she'd been battling her knees, finally compelling them by sheer will to stiffen up. Later she confessed to Betty she'd gone to Cruiser to toss a coin in the air. Her life was in such shape she didn't care how the coin came down, until those fifteen minutes, when she decided to live and didn't know if she'd be able to. It was her last ascent of the peak. ~~she didn't know if she'd be able to~~

On the ascent of the false summit, at the moment my eyes rose above the last obstructing rock, the confrontation was not with anything so simple as death. Seeing the tower was the sort of experience I'd had in the chemistry stockroom when I accidentally broke a bottle and breathed a white dust and for a time, or non-time, went away from all this, without ever so much as falling down.

I stayed well away from that chemical thereafter. *Also from* ~~the same went for~~
Cruiser Peak.

BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL

Monie played a double game. As my advocate in the Climbing Committee session to review applicants for the Rainier climb, she stressed my success on Glacier Peak, two weeks earlier. Once I was approved she took pains to restore me to a condition of salutary terror. On Glacier I'd climbed higher by half than ever in my life, ^{But it} ~~was~~ above the elevation of Glacier's summit, she lectured, that the lassitude and listlessness and loss of appetite begin, and the throwing up, the hallucinations, the falling asleep while walking. I recalled that Somervell, Mallory, Smythe, and their lot had pooped about very adequately at elevations twice that of Rainier. She reminded that Everesters spent months trekking over lofty plateaus and shuttling between ever-higher camps. We Puget Sounders went up our Mountain like rockets, climbing in twenty-four hours or less from the soup-thick atmosphere of sealevel to the thin broth of 14,408 feet.

Somewhere above 10,500 feet (Glacier's summit), ^{she intimated,} the oxygen content ^{abruptly} would drop below the critical level, ^{for me.} My end ^{might} ~~was~~ come as quick as Custer's at Little Big Horn: "Our colonel jumped up with an arrow in his head. He whispered 'Oh Mother' and fell over dead."

Alone within the crowd of Mountaineers strung out in a line stretching over miles of mountain, traveling at my own pace, I chugged steady as a steam engine from the 5500 feet of Paradise Valley to Glacier Vista, dropped to and crossed the Nisqually Glacier (uncrevassed at this level and thus no ropes required), ascended the snowfinger to the Wilson Glacier (ditto), and followed the Wapowety Cleaver to The Castle, 9500 feet. It was a jolly good morning's work.

Well content, I made my first stop and ate a hearty lunch.

So much of the job was done there was no ~~rush to resume~~ ^{hurry about resuming,} I sat a long while, almost fell asleep in the warm sun, decided to defer the nap to camp, and hoisted the Trapper Nelson.

The engine huffed and puffed but couldn't get up steam. The hearty lunch lurched about inside my ribs. I'd not crossed the line of death, but distinctly had crossed a line. So high was I in mineral brown and mineral white that the nearest green of meadow and forest was so far below it was blue. Colors off both ^{edges} ~~edges~~ of the visible spectrum suffused the atmosphere. The exterior world ~~was~~ inches from my eyes was dim, distant, dubious.

As I dropped my pack at Camp Hazard, 11,500 feet, in lava rubble between the icefalls of the Kautz and Wilson Glaciers, beneath the ice cliff of the Kautz, it was evident that the line I had crossed was the boundary of sanity. Who in his senses would spend a night in view of thousands of square miles of two states of the Union plus an ocean with nothing between him and the Milky Way but the feathers of an Army sleeping bag and the thin nylon of a Navy liferaft sail? Who but a loony would trust Monie's owlish counsel that a queasy stomach was best pampered with baby foods which, in their little jars, so closely resembled what a baby spits up? I lay behind a windbreak of lava boulders, wind jetting through the gaps and blowing grit in my strained beef and tapioca pudding; each mouthful churned around ^{minutes} ~~the esophagus~~ before attempting the esophagus.

I was one of the healthy. Far down the cleaver, motionless figures leaned on ice axes or lay face down in the snow. New arrivals in camp joined the

chorus of stomachs emptying out lunches, emptying out breakfasts, emptying out gastric juices, bile, saliva, and chunks of the apparatus. We were the elect, the cream of the cream of the Climbing Course, and we were forty-five invalids, the climb leader and the Climbing Chairman no less than the rest. Some of us were curable if we gave up this madness and returned to Paradise. Certain of the retchings surely were too violent to be survived. A number of bodies already were inert, the wind bouncing pebbles off closed eyelids.

When the sun touched the Pacific Ocean, night was long since complete and absolute at elevations lower than ours. The lights of Paradise twinkled as remotely as stars. The only remaining colors of day were on the uppermost snows of the volcanoes -- Hood and Jefferson to the south in Oregon, Adams and St. Helens on our side of the Columbia River -- and on us, higher in our camp than any of these summits save Adams. In the last, queer, infra-red light I saw all around me, crouched behind lava walls, parka hoods which used to contain living minds, drawstrings tightened around what used to be human faces. The hoods now were mere husks from which the wind had sucked out the humanity, the materiality.

I lay listening to pebbles battering, hailstones rattling the liferaft sail wrapped around me to keep out wind and stars -- and clouds. I shut my eyes tight against the flares of lightning, hugged rocks of the volcano quaking in the thunder.

A wail -- in or of the wind -- summoned me to crawl from bag and sail, pull on boots, lash on crampons, put on mittens, tie into the rope, and join the procession of penitents ascending by flashlight to the Ice Chute. ^{In the dawnlight} ~~we~~/we hacked ladderways of steps ^{as} incandescent mists swirled around the white towers of ~~ice~~ seracs. In full sunlight we emerged from the Ice Chute onto the summit iccap.

Another line was crossed, from air capable of sustaining life with a breath taken every other step to air barely adequate with a breath for each step. The clouds which in the night had filled the valleys and in the dawn had welled up to overtop peaks of the Tatoosh Range now submerged our companion volcanoes. The world was entirely a sea of white cloud, except our solitary white island.

Another line was crossed, to two breaths per step, or three. The lungs labored ~~to exhaustion~~ yet the brain nevertheless was starving -- and, as after a long fast, was cleansed of complexities, simplified to ~~nailed~~ essence. The Whiteness of snow sloped up from the Whiteness of cloudsea to a shining edge above us, dividing Whiteness from a Blueness so dense as nearly to be the Blackness of outer space. Twenty-four hours higher than Paradise, we were stripped of body and mind, sin and sanity, flesh and intellect, reduced to pure, clean spirit, fit to step onto Columbia Crest, 14,408 feet above the saltwater from which, millions of years and sins ago, we'd slimed on our bellies.

IN THE HIPPODROME

The advantage of an American-style low-cost mass education is that it may give a diligent student, ~~one-time smart boy~~, enough clear, hard looks at exterior reality ~~to prevent solipsism~~ and to warn that most of what's reported in the newspapers and history books didn't happen and that hardly anything a nation's leaders say is so, while preserving an ignorance so unblemished that a person verging on maturity can be excited by stumbling into a body of knowledge which public school boys of Old England had caned into their bottoms as children, too young to appreciate it.

For example, getting through the University having read only two or three non-Shakespearean plays of the English Renaissance permitted me to enjoy independently, uninterrupted by class routine, one of the supreme esthetic^t experiences of my life: proceeding generation by generation from the tropes first interpolated in the Mass and then transferred to the cathedral steps; to the pageant wagons that moved down the streets of a town from square to square, at each stop performing their assigned episodes from the Bible; to the mingling of morality and farce in the interludes presented at court and the universities; and finally to the London theaters where Lyly and Peele and Greene and Kyd and Marlowe built so lofty a foundation that even had not Shakespeare used it as a platform to soar out of sight this would have been among the glory times of world literature.

The thrill was more than esthetic. Those were my people attending the Mass, my ancestors standing in the squares as the pageant wagons stopped to

perform their pieces. Some of my family members likely were members of the guilds which sponsored the wagons. One may have played God in Wakefield town and said to Noah, "This is a noble gin," or Noah, who soliloquized while building the ark, "This is a noble gin." Some were groundlings who cracked nuts as Doctor Faustus shared the stage with Mephistophilis, Lucifer, Belzebub, and anonymous Devils, and as Macbeth was tricked to his doom by witches, and as Hamlet speculated whether the ghost were honest or an agent of the Devil luring him to damnation.

I doubt my people were in the audiences as drama declined to The Honest Whore and The Lady of Pleasure; well before the theaters were closed in 1642 to let folks choose up sides in the Civil War ^{my folks} surely were sitting in chapel thumping their brandnew King James Bibles, listening to a nonconformist parson wring a verse; walking home to their cottages, they kept an eye out for Papists and witches and Presbyterians.

The decline of the English theater fascinated me, ^{perhaps} no less than the rise, ^{more, it} ~~both~~ shadowed the ^{character} ~~history~~ of a nation, a people, ^{their} religion, ^{their} ~~an~~ ethos. The taste acquired for the down side of the cycle, I was attracted to the Great Decliners, the one who demolished ^{naïve} ~~lingering~~ expectations ~~of naive patriotism~~ that America was fated to be great, and the other who taught that ~~a millenium~~ ^{of history} ~~of Rome~~ on the toboggan could be as amusing as Tom Jones pratfalling along the road to London.

We jolly boys of the Blue Moon (and Rainbow, and Red Robin, and Eastlake Gardens) were Spenglerians -- or more congenially, since the gloomy Teutonic Gus never cracked a smile, Gibbonians. ~~Making a wry commentator of his sort,~~ American history failed to interest us; even in its highest flights, when the West was being depopulated and repopulated and when a war was being fought to determine whether slavehood should be based on skin color or the economic

status of grandparents, it was corny as Kansas in August, dull as a speech on the Fourth of July.

A political activist now and then would buy his way into our company with a pitcher of beer. We'd listen as we drank his beer and he explained the differences between Republicans and Democrats, ~~and~~ When the pitcher was empty we'd ~~would~~ ask, "Which are the Greens and which are the Blues?"

Occasionally a lonesome Marxist, searching for the Red Revolution the downtown papers assured him was in progress at the University, intruded his sober sides and dreary dialectic. We'd listen so intently his eyes would shine with dreams of founding a cell right here in the Blue Moon. Then we'd inquire where he stood in the dispute between the Nicaeans and Arians, whether his party line was Monophysitic or Nestorian.

I truly felt sad, sometimes, not to be in the cathedral partaking of the body and the blood, or in Wakefield town watching my uncle as God or Noah, or in a London theater where the gigantic Edward Alleyn, playing the Jew of Malta, terrified we groundlings as he stomped to the tip of the apron, shook his red fright wig, and confided:

As for myself, I walk abroad a-nights,
And kill sick people groaning under walls;
Sometimes I go about and poison wells;
And now and then, to cherish Christian thieves,
I am content to lose some of my crowns,
That I may, walking in my gallery,
See 'em go pinion'd along by my door.

I wasn't keen on marching with Cromwell's ~~Iron~~ Ironsides, though, nor attending chapel, which doubtless was another name for Sunday School.

RED DEVILS

Nowhere in America was the postwar sport of chasing red devils for fun and profit pursued more avidly than in what Postmaster-General Farley once had referred to as "the forty-seven states and the Soviet of Washington."

The state legislature's Little Nixon Committee wasted no effort beating around the bushes and wheatfields and apple orchards; the chairman headed on a beeline from his home in Spokane to Seattle to roust the Democratic Party's liberal wing, ^{residents of} ~~the people who lived in~~ Lake Union houseboats, and the University of Washington. Newspaper headlines blatted the non-news that a number of professors once had been members of the Communist Party, that one professor frequently had been accused of membership and as frequently had proved the charges baseless, and that three professors proudly admitted continued membership.

Membership, past or present, violated no existing law of nation, state, or city. The president of the University, however, thought it might render a scholar incapable of free inquiry. The Tenure Committee of the University Senate agreed to query the professors who had just been subjected to the Little Nixon Inquisition and had the scarlet letter permanently tattooed on their foreheads. The Tenure Committee further permitted the president to appoint as prosecutor ^{an} ~~the~~ off-campus, downtown fascist who had tasted his first red blood in the Palmer Raids after World War I and had been on the hunt ever since.

During my years as Professor Phillips' student, teaching assistant, and friend we had many a ^{rambling} ~~long afternoon~~ conversation in his office. Never was the subject politics. Frequently it was ~~the~~ philosophy, often Keltic folklore, more often

mountains. One summer we went for five days together in the Olympics, the two of ^{v5} ~~me~~, his son, and a friend of the son. I supplied ~~the transportation~~ the Model A, three of us in front and one kid plus the packs in the trunk. Dr. Phillips brought ~~all~~ the food. ~~As was revealed on the trail,~~ Mostly he brought hard-boiled eggs, and not enough. We were weak from hunger when he ^{noted} ~~saw~~ we were surrounded by ~~fishy~~ fishermen, and began cadging their extra trout. He broiled them on a stick, also not having brought cooking utensils. ~~Because of~~ ~~the eggs we had plenty of salt~~ Alacazam.

In a lush meadow on the slopes of Lillian Ridge he exulted over the only two mountain flowers whose names he knew, tiger lily and columbine. For years afterward they were the only two mountain flowers whose names I knew.

We scrambled to the summit of a nameless peak at the head of Grand Valley and on the descent sat by a creek to eat hard-boiled eggs. I was slapping mosquitoes, ~~by~~ by reflex, totally incurious about how they went about their filthy business. Whether as a Communist or a philosopher or simply as a mountain hiker, he was fascinated. I shivered to see him let the bug sink its sword to the hilt, withdraw when it hit a dry hole, stab again, and again, and at last, ^a ~~h~~ving struck a vein, stand on its head and suck its little gutbag full of blood. When it was bursting with redness and in the act of pulling out, he slapped, laughing, "I gave her a happy death -- assuming a mosquito can be happy. Do you suppose that is asked about us? When we get slapped, does Someone laugh and peel another hard-boiled egg?"

The prosecutor pinned me to the witness chair with baleful glower and demanded ^d ~~a~~ to know what Professor Phillips had taught me.

Whiteness, dubito ergo ~~non~~ dubito, billiard balls, the oil can on the other side of the Moon.

Dialectical materialism?

No, sir, naturalism.

He destroyed your faith in God?

To the contrary, sir. I entered his class an atheist, left a believer.

In what, Marx?

No, sir, in the One that remains while the many change and pass.

The Tenure Committee dismissed charges against the professors who had quit the party, as well as the one who never had belonged. They suggested that Phillips and his two comrades be placed on probation while the subject of Marxist discipline versus free inquiry was given scholarly study, along with the question of how free was a ~~Marxist~~ Baptist, Methodist, or Catholic.

The president decided otherwise. He placed on probation the former and never-was Party members and fired the three comrades.

The American Association of University Professors ^{gave} ~~put~~ the University ~~on~~
^{resounding tut-tut,} ~~probation.~~ So many professors ~~boycotted~~ the president ~~was~~ ^{willing to cross his doorstep}
 couldn't hold a decent faculty tea, ~~with~~ nobody ~~there~~ but business
 administration, medical school, and engineering. He left Seattle for his
 spiritual home, Southern California. Dr. Phillips moved to Northern California
 to work as a carpenter, a trade he'd learned in youth and kept up with through
 his academic years, aware from the outset that philosophy was a chancy business.
~~As my daddy always warned me, if you want to get along, stay away from~~
~~politics and religion.~~

HIS FOREFINGER

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
 I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
 I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
 Of my own mind...

The Tetons are widely admired as a classic of heroic geography; the Rockies have a number of other excellent fault blocks; and the east scarp of the Sierra is a matchless wall. However, the largest free-standing lumps of Earth in the forty-eight states are the Cascade volcanoes. Grandest by an order of magnitude -- highest, massiest, iciest -- is The Mountain. ~~Were the adjacent civilization as old in place as that of Japan, it would be as holy as Fuji.~~ Any person growing up in the region and reading Adonais recognizes ~~that this is~~ ^{it as} the Earthly ~~Earthly~~ objectification of the One.

A hundred years after Captain George Vancouver brought The Mountain to European attention by putting it on his charts as "Rainier," Jim Hill gave fame to a quite different mountain by laying his Great Northern rails along its base. Completion several decades later of the Stevens Pass Highway, and invention of the Kodak, placed the image of this peak in family albums across America.

The Pleistocene history of Mount Index ^{is} ~~was~~ uniquely interesting. Rising virtually from sealevel ^{and} close to the Cascade front, the massif sat squarely in the path of the continental ice sheet that several times ~~came~~ flowed south from Canada and east up the Skykomish valley. The continental ice blunted the north end of the massif. ~~topography~~ Alpine glaciers of local origin independently excavated the cirque of Lake Serene on the east and the cirque of Anderson Creek on the west. ~~Between~~ ^The two of them ~~they~~ nearly removed the dividing ridge altogether, leaving only a skinny arete. A lesser glacier

scooped The Bowl, ~~sculpted~~ an incipient cirque, in the blunted north end of the massif.

When ^{climbers,} in the course of the history of their sport, ~~climbers~~ began scouting the summit of Index that dominated the view from railway and highway, they found North Peak ^{to be} ~~was~~ not the kind of mountain they had gotten to know and love in the interior of the North Cascades, where the Ice Age ^{continued} ~~was still~~ in progress. Cleansing glaciers had been absent from the neighborhood so long that weeds of the valley floor had crept inch by inch up the precipice, shrubs and trees ^{had} found roothold on cliffs, organic debris ^{had} filled cracks a climber might use for fingers or toes, and organic acids ^{had} weathered the rock to a condition nearly suitable for agriculture. The route to the mile-high summit lay entirely, except for the last few hundred feet, in forest zones that on next-door mountains, not so cliffy, had been logged. This was not the ^{concert} ~~hall~~ for a subtle orchestration of cracks and ledges and chimneys, not a stage for a rock-dancer. An ascent, ~~was~~ had to be by belly friction over moss and grass, monkey pull-ups in jungles of sidewise-growing cedars, throwing a leg over a rotten log lodged in vertical dirt. Climbers who thought about ^{such} things ~~like that~~ recognized North Peak as the Earthly objectiv^{ation} of the Other One.

North Peak had been investigated and explored, renounced ^{and} and denounced a hundred times, /climbed three times, before my generation arrived on the scene. For the most part we laughed, driving by on the highway, headed for clean and noble peaks of the North Cascades interior. It reminded of the youth getting his first erection and running off to show the neighborhood girls.

To be sure, I remembered hearing in my youth that the technique worked with some of the neighborhood girls. It worked ~~was~~ for North Peak. Certain of the foolish and silly adolescents I climbed with took to scorning The

Mountain as banal. Among them there developed a North Peak cult. In my second climbing season, two of my foolish and silliest friends did the sixth ascent. Thereafter, when we drove the highway, they insisted I pull the Jeep off on a shoulder while they groveled in the gravel, salaamed, and shot more rolls of film. I commented that this was, on the first level, atrocious taste, and on the last, blasphemy.

I fled Him... But through keeping bad company, the next summer I took part in the tenth ascent.

The hours of dawn and morning were a nightmare of steep dirt, intertwined cedar trees, and flowers growing where the hadⁿ wanted doorknobs. Everything was made worse by this being the hottest day of the summer. The hours of afternoon and evening were a farce in search of a tragedy. We rappelled from anchors as secure as irrational faith, ~~leapt~~^{leaped} for holds impossible to attain without prayer. At the end we ran out of daylight and became four lunatic flashlights.

Nevertheless...

On the ascent we came to The Notch, at the top of The Bowl. I was so debilitated by extreme dehydration that not long after, at dusk, I would be falling asleep at every rest stop. Now, I set out up the arete between the Lake Serene and Anderson Creek cirques, a knifeblade of rock one tennis shoe wide, ~~between two skies. My body took care of itself; following the drill: climb with the eyes, test holds, maintain three-point suspension, keep weight over the feet, and move smoothly, in balance, light of step yet firmly attached to Earth.~~

~~My body was all right, could take care of itself. Later, when it couldn't, there still were the three companions and the rope. Nobody was going to die today or tonight. But a person who climbs with the foolish and the silly risks becoming so himself.~~

I fled Him, down the arches of the years...

I can't regret getting caught. ~~Sente went to a lot of trouble to imagine his Inferno. I got there simply by keeping bad company.~~ It was exhilarating, on the arete above The Notch, to walk the tip of a flame.

STAINS IN THE WHITE RADIANCE

The peak of Mount Sir Donald, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

Stefansson, author of The Friendly Arctic, in commenting on the English heroics in polar regions which typically ended in tragedy, observed that an adventure is a sign of incompetence. It is equally true that an adventure is an act of worship. Where competent, we merely engineer. The omniscient, or those think they are, who ~~are omniscient~~ worship nothing, or at most themselves.

The dream of dreams in our third climbing season was to take a step beyond the Cascades and Olympics toward -- who could say what? Poverty might not confine us forever to our home continent. In the interim, the northern ~~stretch~~ stretches of that continent held challenges enough for a hundred lifetimes. Many took time and money on the expedition scale. Others, though, were attainable with a week of vacation and several tanks of gas. The trick was to pick an objective far enough beyond what we'd dared in the past to be truly adventurous -- but not too far.

The generality of ambitious climbers ^{with a week free} go for first ascents, thus rating a paragraph in a journal and the right to name a peak/nobody previously had recognized to be a peak, ~~as distinguished from a bump on a ridge~~. This is the sort of people who take it upon themselves to invent their own religions, not understanding that the only sound foundation for a church is the past, the more of it the better. There is a profound difference between the Reverend Billy Bob rassling the Devil in his circus tent and the priest serving Mass in the

cathedral, and between the yahoos throwing fits in the dirt and worshippers murmuring their paternosters.

The name of the peak we chose -- the title, actually -- reflected class on us. Had we investigated we'd likely have learned the fellow was knighted for pomposity or rapacity and his name was spread on the map by hired bootlickers. Never mind -- to us the peak symbolized that race ruled by king/queen now as by Victoria, Elizabeth, the Henrys, the Williams, Alfred, and the once and future Arthur. It was this breed who in the nineteenth century set out from the universities and churches to explore the Matterhorn, and in the twentieth to attempt Everest.

Whymper himself had been here -- during the era when Glacier House, staffed by Old World chefs and Swiss guides, was the climbing center of the New World -- to see the mountain famed as a superb example of a "matterhorn" -- his specific become the generic. Odell, who in the 1920s watched Mallory and Irvine disappear in the mists, now climbed here regularly, as did Smythe, who in the 1930s had gotten as high as anybody on Everest. From the moment we boarded the Canadian Pacific train at Golden for the afternoon ride to Glacier we were not colonial rednecks moaning and screeching in a circus tent, we were communicants of the established church.

In the dusk of September 2 Tom and I descended the trail to the Wheeler Hut, where an Alpine Club member had invited us to stay because simply by coming here we'd proved ourselves properly churched. Betty had supper waiting on the stove, all our remaining basecamp provisions (a can of stewed tomatoes and half a loaf of bread) hot in the pot. We were famished, having finished off the last of our

high-camp provisions (four circles of Sailor Boy pilot bread and two squares of Hershey's slab chocolate) eight hours before, on the summit. Even so, we scarcely could spoon tomatoes in for the memories babbling out.

We rattled off names of the peaks and glaciers we'd seen, more names than in the begats of the Old Testament: east beyond the broad trench of the Columbia, the full length of the Rockies from Assiniboine to Hobson; north beyond Rogers Pass, the cross-Selkirk route of the Canadian Pacific, the ice massif of Sir Sanford and the rock towers of the Adamant Range; south beyond the deep pit of Glacier Circle, the Dawson, Bishops, Purity, and Battle Ranges, and, farther south in the Purcell Mountains, the Bugaboos; directly below us on one hand, 7000 feet straight down, silver meanders of the Beaver River, and below on the other, the dozens of square miles of the Illecillewaet Névé, an icefield seemingly strayed from Greenland.

For all the day's exercise, that night I lay awake in my bunk repeating each pitch and belay, foothold and handhold, from the Uto-Donald Col, 8200 feet, to the summit, 10,818 feet. In the morning on the train to Golden, and the afternoon driving the Jeep south along the Columbia, Tom and I told and retold the story to Betty and each other. A half^{bar}case of stubbies picked up in Idaho reminded of fine details, so many that at a restaurant stop we were hard-pressed to spill them out through incoming cheeseburgers. Voices stilled when we unrolled sleeping bags in the parking lot of a gas station outside Spokane, resumed when the station opened for business and we finished the drive home.

The forty-five hours between our unroping in the Uto-Donald Col and arriving in Seattle merely commenced the celebration. Photographs had to be examined to discern the exact block on the crest of the Northwest Ridge that forced us out on the frosty north face, our tennis shoes treading ^{air} high above the Uto Glacier, and the smooth stretch where we briefly could walk with hands in pockets, looking down the southwest face to the Vaux Glacier.

I cursed myself for not picking up samples of the quartzite. I should at least have got a piece of the dominant gray, in shades light to dark, and of the gleaming white, and of the thin band of exquisite pink. In gaining 2600 feet from col to summit, and losing 2600 feet from summit to col, how many pieces of the ridge did I hold in my hands? What other mountain had I fondled so? Not all my other mountains together.

The ascent was keened by the fear our reach had exceeded our grasp, that we'd be defeated, ^{would} ~~to~~ return to Seattle humiliated. The descent began in a greater fear -- that we had climbed so high we never could get down, ~~never could~~ ~~Seattle again~~. This was succeeded by a sorrow that we had to go down. To say we were merely eleven hours ~~on the~~ on ~~the~~ ridge and summit misses the point: We're still there.

TILT

The reason I fell so deep asleep in so preposterous a spot was that though the Gendarme was too steep and smooth for us to climb, and that's why Tom and Johnny had traversed around the corner onto the north face to find a bypass, it made an ideal backrest. Further, though a black squall had gobbled up Baker and Shuksan, north across the Skagit valley, the sun here was warm and the air calm.

I was sleepy for several reasons. First (or rather, third), I'd kicked all the steps, thousands of them, up the couloir from the bergschrund to the moat, and out of respect for the steepness and hardness of the snow on a route previously climbed only three times (a fourth party was spending eternity in the schrund) had kicked them painstakingly and strenuously. Upon attaining the summit ridge I felt I'd done my share of the day's work and was content to have the rope turned around to let me take a relaxed ride in the caboose. Second (second), we'd left Seattle late, hadn't dropped packs in moraines of Boston Basin until twilight, and thus had enjoyed too few hours of rest Saturday night. Third (first), Friday night the jolly boys and I had closed the Blue Moon and afterward, at the Pink Palace, played pinball to dawn.

This explains the peculiarity of my going to sleep with left buttock on the brink of the south face of Forbidden and right buttock on the brink of the north face. It doesn't explain the circumstances of the waking up.

There were no preliminary tremors. Due to my responsibilities as Climbing Chairman, in overall charge of the Climbing Course, my spring climbs had mostly

been on practice trips, educational for the students and sociable for me. In recent, weeks, however, I'd experienced sufficient exposure to give my tolerance the required annual booster shot. I'd done two decent little rock climbs -- Slippery Slab Tower and a wintry traverse of Lundin, ordinarily a scramble but on this day so sheathed in ice we had to use hardware. Our ascent of the Adams Glacier, a third or fourth ascent, put us on our best behavior, including as it did a very steep and long crampon slope where, if each of a person's twenty spikes were not faithfully slammed with some force into the frozen snow, that person and his ropemates were in for a nasty sliding fall, extremely abrasive. There then was a maze of crevasses from which we escaped by leaping a gap so wide that only our first man, six and a half feet tall, made it, he then reeling us shorter-legged folks out of the hole, one after another, like so many fish.

There were no preliminary tremors, nor any immediate aftershocks, either. Tom and Johnny having circumvented the Gendarme, we regained the summit ridge, a scrambler's delight. In one stretch the ridge crest was a knife-edge perfect for handholds and the south face was a slab perfect for tennis-shoe friction; hanging my fanny out in space to give the shoes good grip, I looked down through my crotch a vertical mile to the Cascade River and wished for two more hands, in order to take a picture. As we were signing the summit register the black fury spit out Baker and Shuksan and took ~~me~~^{out} after us, dundering and blitzening. Mists from nowhere swirled around us and out of blue sky fell monster raindrops. We hopped back along the ridge listening for "zee buzzing of zee bees" so dreaded in the Alps. At the Gendarme, Tom and Johnny insisted I downclimb. I informed them mortal man could not do so, but impelled by bright lights and loud sounds went over the brink and was lowered like a sack of potatoes to my napping

spot. Tom and Johnny were merry about my hollering and cursing because the fury veered off to chew up Buckner and Goode and they could afford to rig a gentile rappel for themselves.

I didn't give more than a passing thought to that moment of awaking until two weekends later, partway up an unclimbed route on Buck. Vic was on belay almost the full rope-length below, nagging me to tell him what the heck I was doing and when I was going to bring him up. My closest protection was a piton a dozen feet below and around a corner, nicely situated so that in a fall I would ~~have~~^{do} a pendulum swing that would end nowhere near the route. I was standing atop a pillar separated from the cliff by a wide crack that seemed to be growing wider. While pounding in a piton to protect an attempt at surmounting a rubbly-red, rotten overhang, I couldn't help glancing through my crotch down the thousand-foot couloir to the glacier.

I recalled, then, that on awaking on the ridge of Forbidden I truly had no idea where I was. Above me -- sky. To my left -- sky. To my right -- sky. The one thing I knew for sure was this was not Betty's and my bed in our basement apartment in the University District. I clutched the mountain beneath my butt with both hands as it tilted left and dangled me over what I then recognized as the Cascade River, and tilted right and dangled me over what I then recognized as a tributary of Thunder Creek.

Subsequently I thought a lot about the awaking. Fears of falling while sleeping are very ancient and entirely rational and have nothing to do with Freud's sex life.

Rockabye baby, in the tree top,
When the wind blows, the cradle will rock.
When the bough breaks, the cradle will fall,
And down will come baby, cradle and all.

In these five summers since the South Face of The Tooth and Cruiser Peak I'd so far lost the innate fear of falling as to positively rejoice in exposure -- as a climber must in order to be a climber.

Ah, was there the rub? To be, or not to be. Returned from Canada the previous fall with two months of the climbing season left, I'd let the year run out without attempting another serious ascent. Thesis and antithesis. Now, synthesis. After Sir Donald, this.

THE TWO REMAIN

Philosophy 1 convinced me that atheism exceeds the evidence, and English 66 that it's an unnecessary deprivation. Whenever a person wants One, there is a God. Care must be taken, of course, to rigorously remove human attributes, such as sentience and lawlessness and irrationality. Worship is a one-way street. Miracles are not permitted.

My Huckleberry God was entirely human, if super-super so, a great-great-great-etc. grandfather with feet in the forest and head in the stars. In my early years at Lincoln High He lost His body; later, His mind went. The void was filled at the University by Shelley.

I came close to the ultimate intimacy with the One on my first ascent of Rainier, or so I thought. Days and weeks later, walking about the University District, I'd catch sight of the largest and whitest heap of American earth and stop dead in my tracks to relive the moment. The Northwest Ridge of Sir Donald took me to the same neighborhood. The reason I let that ^{particular} climbing season run out with no further serious ascents was that the experience effectively ended my need to climb, though I was years realizing it.

Most Christian sects would amend Shelley's verse to read, "The Three remain..." I never saw the utility of trisecting the One. Still, I never was a true monotheist. In Huckleberry times there was the God of that place. But simultaneously there was the Seattle God, just as big and powerful and old, but no fun, and not to be trusted because He might hand a kid over to the Fellow in the furnace. When this God lost body and mind It was replaced not by the One

but the Other, heir of the Fellow in the furnace, known to me in one of His aspects as the Pursuer.

When my eyes overtopped the uppermost rocks of the false summit of Cruiser Peak and viewed the final tower, it was quaking so violently with Evil that my camera couldn't get a clear picture. The worst day of my mountain life was on the North Peak of Index, eighteen hours in the Other's lap.

On Rainier and Sir Donald -- and Cruiser and the North Peak -- I had quasi-mystical experiences perhaps as intense as are possible without drugs more potent than alcohol (such as, the white powder in the chemistry stockroom) or a gran mal seizure of the sort Dostoevsky describes in The Idiot. From these experiences I gained final freedom from the ~~new~~^{neo}-Platonism which splits the self between body and soul, makes man "an angel imprisoned in an animal." Suppose a person did manage to get a direct line to the One? (And by luck it was the One and not ^{-to recall Descartes's warning -} the Other?) And after hanging up the phone came out of the booth wearing a beatific smile and babbling a Message? As Kant said, it would be "news from nowhere."

Climbing, through excesses of self-flagellation that would have daunted a stylite, and by tight-rope walks above catastrophe that would terrify a ~~circus acrobat~~^{circus acrobat}, lets a climber return from a hard peak feeling ineffably superior. He is convinced he was there, or nearly, almost as if he'd actually fallen off the cliff and his spirit had evacuated the beast and flown to the Heaven in the flowers and waterfalls and sunsets.

After a number of such occasions, though, never getting all the way to the One or the Other, hearing no news of any kind from anywhere, he understands he was on the brink not of a mystical experience but merely extinction. Of course, possibly they're the same thing. Members of the "near death experience" cult believe so. Credible testimony still is awaited from those who have known the "all the way experience." ~~to be the same as the other~~
~~the book is in the~~

SILENCE, SILENCE ABOVE

Leaving one car at the Lake Serene trailhead on the east side of the Index massif, we drove in the other to Proctor creek, on the west side of the Persis massif, and slept overnight by the logging road, elevation 1000 feet. At 6 a.m. we set out ⁱⁿ ~~from~~ the slash and brush of a recent clearcut, soon entering virgin forest. At 3000 feet we walked from bare ground onto snow, rain-hardened to begin, then new and sloppy. Forest yielded to fog-dimmed parkland and at 10:30 in the morning of May 4 we stood atop Persis, 5452 feet, shivering in the cold-driving gray.

Wind blew open a hole. Swirling mists framed Index, its walls footed far below in spring-greening trees, plastered on high with fresh snow. Our objective, the South or Main Peak, highest of the three, lay on the far side of the Anderson Creek cirque. The summit, 5979 feet, was two miles distant -- for a crow. Inspection of the horseshoe ridge circuitously connecting the two peaks revealed it to be longer and more broken than I remembered from an earlier climb of Persis, the one that led to this climb. In gaining 4700 feet (gross, a bit more than the net) to the top of Persis, half in swampy snow, we'd thought we'd broken the back of the trip and would be atop Index not much behind the crow. We now revised our estimated arrival there to 2 or even 3 o'clock. No ~~time~~ ^{worry.} That would leave six hours of daylight, more than plenty for the quick run down to Lake Serene and ~~out~~ out to the car.

At 11 o'clock, sunflashes igniting white cliffs, the snow underfoot a brilliance of crystals a-flame, we boisterously ^{ly} set out to do what never had been done before but over a winter of beating drums around the climbing

community had become already famous -- the Grand Persdex Traverse.

The beginning was a romp, with many a pause to click cameras at alpine trees erupting from fields of clean white, at cornices jutting over the void of Anderson Creek.

Then the ridge dropped to a saddle at 4800 feet, a loss of some 700 feet, and very much regretted it was, to be sure. Beyond rose a secondary summit which, if climbed, would entail another loss of elevation. We therefore contoured, plowing across benches that a few weeks later would be meadows spattered with ponds; ~~The~~ Grand Traverse then would be a hike. It qualified as a climb, now, precisely because progress was tortuously slow, boots sinking deep. A spur from the secondary summit crossed our path and we plugged 400 feet to the top, expecting to return to the horseshoe and resume ridge-walking. The crest was composed of rock splinters and elfinwood thickets. There would be no ridge-walking today.

So, we would contour the sidehill. We plunge-stepped down to a nook to begin. Beyond rose another spur. Climbing that, we found another nook, another spur. There would be no sidehilling today.

On the flats we sank merely to the calf. On the ups and downs the lead man, the stepkicker -- that is to say, the post-hole digger, or better, the trench-wallower -- went in to the thighs. Steps were not taken by swinging the feet forward but by shoving the knees, grunting the guts. Even ^{to} descending ~~was~~ was laborious, the snow too soft for glissading; plunge-stepping, the feet stuck fast in the post holes and had to be pulled straight up and out for sticking in the next holes. The five of us alternated the lead frequently. Fifty steps

were a stint. The man in front would count, "...forty-eight, forty-nine, FIFTY!"
and arise minutes later
and fall aside, face down in the snow, ~~and arise minutes later~~ to fall in at
the end of the line.

At 2 o'clock we should have been approaching the summit of Index. At
2 o'clock we hadn't seen Index since 11:30, didn't know where it was, ~~didn't~~
~~know where it was~~. Clouds lowered and the wind blew ~~fat~~ fat snowflakes
that splatted our faces like wet dishrags.

At 3 o'clock we gasped and heaved onto the crest of another spur -- and
lay in the snow mute, too dismayed to groan. We'd been underway from Persis
four hours, gaining a gross of 1500 feet, for a day's total of 6200 feet --
double what would be considered a nice little early-May conditioner -- and
we were at 4800 feet, lower than Persis, and from the crest saw Index at last.
It was still a crow's or a raven's three-quarter mile distant. We still had
1200 feet to gain -- more than that because before the final climb there was
a final drop into a nook.

Our choices were two. ~~One~~ We could retreat. In five or more hours,
assuming we could stagger ~~enough~~ that long, we'd regain the summit of Persis.
More likely we'd have to crawl in a snow cave, soaked to our skins from long
immersion in white slop, and shiver out the night. Two, we could complete the
Grand Traverse, or as much of it as we could manage, and then shiver out the
night.

At the end of a long afternoon climbing endless switchbacks up burn
meadows and avalanche swaths wide open to the sun, the climber who sticks his
hot face in a snowmelt torrent achieves an ecstasy that has been compared

to sex. After hours creeping on fingers and toes up a cliff sterilized by millenia of ice, the climber who catches sight of a bit of color in a cranny does, indeed, "see all Heaven in a wildflower."

After great pain a formal feeling comes.
The nerves sit ceremonious like tombs.

All of these the summit ridge of Index gave us. Alpine shrubs were fretworks of hoarfrost. Wind had blown portions of the crest clear and we walked across ~~slabs~~ ^{sheets} of ~~transparent~~ ^{transparent} ice overlaying naked rock. The blown snow had been drifted in heaps so powdery that in wallowing through we stirred light mists of ~~perfectly~~ crystals that we breathed into our noses and open mouths like so much deliciously nippy air. Cornices of ~~monster~~ ^{Himalayan} dimensions jutted over the Lake Serene cirque. Fluted snow walls plummeted below the cornices, ^{of view.} ~~out~~ [^] The clouds mostly had melted, the sky was mainly blue, the sun bright -- but low, so very low we were eerily sidelighted.

At 5 o'clock, 7700 gross feet gained, there was no more. We looked down on cold white crags of Middle Peak and North Peak and far far down to warm green forests of the Skykomish River.

At 5:30 we took note of how close the fireball was to the horizon. In sudden panic we began running.

And stopped short at the top of the "hikers' gully" down to Lake Serene. No hikers would venture here for months. Nor sane climbers for weeks. The cold-shadowed, cliff-walled chute had the look of an avalanche waiting for a human foot. I tied in to a rope, my mates at the ready to reel me in should the slope go, and probed a short way down. I found the new snow was inert muck

solidly glued to a raincrust. Oh joy! We will glissade, the first free ride of the day! Our bottoms sank deep in bathtubs and stuck fast. Oh, well. We will plunge-step. At each plunge the boot was supported by the crust to the instant of its push-off, ~~to the next plunge, and~~ then broke the crust and dropped deep into ~~the underlying~~ thigh-deep morass.

The couloir opened out below on the shelf of a one-time apron glacier. Twice we descended the apron to the brinks of cliffs falling to cirques, ~~and~~ ~~one now occupied by Lake Serene, the other by the~~ headwaters of Index Creek. Twice we regained the lost elevation in snow so loose that progress was possible only by swimming -- or at one place, by climbing a tree and leaping from its top. On a third ^{try} ~~descent~~ we broke through the cliffs to Index Creek valley and once more began to climb. At 9 o'clock the snow rounded ^{and sloped down to Lake Serene.} over to the pass, 3000 feet, [^] Day was utterly gone, night only not complete due to the snow reflecting light of the sky. Our gross elevation gain now totalled nearly 9000 feet -- three of those "nice little early-May conditioners."

The frozen surface of Lake Serene was -- for a wonder -- hard. We loped across the dimming white plain. Ghostly walls of Index loomed thousands of feet above. The enormous fan of avalanche snow sprawled far out over the plain. In mind's ear one could hear the awful thunderings of the slides which within days of our arrival had been shaking the Earth underfoot in a basin now so silent, solemn, holy, or the reverse. The irrational thought flashed through my addled head that it would be fitting to kneel and say, "now I lay me down to sleep..."

At the cirque lip we walked from snow onto good brown forest soil, the first since morning. At 9:30 we found the trail, a ladderway of roots and rocks, and

clambered by flashlight down the cliffs ^{beside} ~~along the side of~~ Bridal Veil Falls.

I'd forgotten that our exit car was parked on a knoll, that we had a final several hundred feet to gain. It wasn't possible. Our mortified flesh didn't have another uphill inch. My companions flung themselves to the ground, measuring out their graves. I continued, wafted along by perfumes of the springtime flowers, the night music of waterfalls and frogs.

At 10:30, beside the car, I lay full length on my back and just-like-that my body vanished. No thirst. No hunger. No pain or weariness. No pounding of heart or laboring of lungs. From the top of my head to the soles of my feet, nothing was left but a Consciousness. Not of Earth -- that was gone too, all the flowers and the frogs, along with my fingers and nose and toes.

Stars. Nothing but stars.

THE NEXT BRIGHT BOLT

The puff of smoke erupting from the forest in the bottom of the valley, and the whooping and hollering transmitted upward, person to person, to those of us still at Long's Pass, told nothing about the situation beside Ingalls Creek except that there was a situation.

The rush to the scene depopulated the pass ~~in an instant~~. I fell behind, having volunteered to carry a section of the stretcher, ^{and its} ~~its~~ network of aluminum tubing proved ^{ing} incapable of passing a bush without grabbing hold. A fellow had been assigned to accompany me, that I should not become the object of a second rescue. He, however, was itching to ^{photograph} ~~take~~ the action, ^{whatever it was.} ~~and get some pictures of it.~~ Repeatedly as I struggled ^{left} -- alone -- to pull the contraption loose it let go unexpectedly and launched me headfirst -- the last time down a cliff whose hard, sharp edges bruised, slashed, and abraded me but did no harm to the damn stretcher.

I lay crumpled and dazed in the duff ~~while~~, peacefully bleeding, reflecting that this was precisely how Dick Berge had gone, four weeks earlier, as he and Tom were retreating from the North Face of Baring. They were below the difficulties, clambering down small-tree jungles on and around cliffs. I'd once scrambled around in those jungles. I made it back to the trail. Berge didn't. As the bullfighters say, the timing is everything.

Three months earlier, Art ^{Jessett} had fallen in a crevasse on St. Helens. As we of the Climbing Course were prompt to comment, some of us rather too sanctimoniously, the incident would have been merely a good laugh had he been observing the Climbing Code, ^{and} ~~had~~ been roped to his companions. He was a

second-year climber, full of beans, a top student, already marked ~~in our~~
^{future}
~~books~~ as a leader. Three years before, I'd been a second-year climber, full of
 beans, and had picked up on the gnostic truth (the one more true than the
 Climbing Code, revealed ~~only~~ ^{solely} to ~~the~~ initiates) that St. Helens was such a cinch
 that only sissies roped. I, too, was unroped when I fell in a crevasse. I
 flung out my arms and went in ~~to~~ to my armpits and slithered snakelike out
 to the accompaniment of Betty and Chuck laughing as they munched cookies and
 swigged lemonade. Otto, the physician in the rescue party on St. Helens,
 estimated Art was perhaps as many as eighteen hours freezing to death.

Art. Berge. Now this. We were fond of saying the most dangerous part
 of a climb was the drive home. Now, lonesomely bleeding in the forest, I
 recalled: The rock the size of a watermelon that whoosed ^h down the gully on Little
 Si, passing between Betty's head and mine. The ice ax jumbled up in the avalanche
 in the Lundin Chute that stabbed Betty in the ribs a hand's breadth from her
 heart. The snow plaque on Big Four that slipped off a shelf and tumbled in
 fragments down the couloir, one chunk taking a funny bounce out of the fall
 line and pursuing Ted horizontally across the slope. The snow plaque on
 Thompson which slipped off and fell with horrid grindings and smashings ~~to the~~
~~ground~~ about one and a half minutes after I crossed under the outside of the
 plaque, ~~using it as a handhold and pausing to stuff some of it in my dry mouth~~
 The moment on Buck when I stood on the pillar ^{too} ~~too~~ small for both boots and my
 knees commenced the sewing machine. The unroped romp along ledges on the side
 of Castle when I stepped on a nice flat foothold that proved not to be attached
 to the mountain and in tilting out gave me an ~~infinite~~ ^{eternally} long vista down into
 the ~~infinite~~ ^{infinite} fog.

These were a few. There were hundreds more. Without the dice being ^{flung} in the air at least once, a trip wasn't a climb, it was a hike.

Cam, and Cam only, noticed I was ^{missing,} ~~missing.~~ He came back, looking. He told me Pablo was still on the summit.

The rescuers were clustered around Lardy. Otto was feeding plasma into his arm. ^{One} ~~One~~ was examining his burns. Tom was commandeering foods ~~and liquids~~ that might tempt a person who hadn't eaten for two days.

From the edge of the circle of cameras I gave a wave. Lardy smiled wanly. We'd last climbed together two weeks earlier, on Rainier. We'd then agreed to do Canadian Border Peak this weekend. I'd last talked to him Friday, to arrange details. A forest fire on Swamp Creek was blocking access to Canadian Border. He'd always wanted to do the West Ridge of Stuart and had recruited Pablo and Dusty. The four of us could climb in two-man teams, ~~was~~ ideal. I told him he was raving crazy to go to the east side of the Cascades in August, the desert sun would fry what was left of his brains. God knows he had ^{little} ~~not much~~ left in his head since doing the sixth ascent of the North Peak of Index, three years before.

Why didn't I feel guilty, lying in the grass of our []]Cougar Mountain acres on a Sunday, playing with the puppy, Tamburlaine, my first dog in ten years, watching my chickens scratching and my pregnant wife hoeing potatoes?

Incurious as a second-class tourist I admired the cloud show ~~on~~ Sunday afternoon, the monster billows that rolled from some dreadful birthplace in the east to the Cascade front, ~~and hung there.~~ The range of thunderheads dwarfed the range of peaks. My concern was whether they would roll onward to

Cougar Mountain. In Massachusetts, ^{my} ~~that~~ childhood summer, ^{there} a wrathful God gave us sinners due warning nearly every afternoon and evening. Ever since, lightning had held me in the deepest and most primitive terror. That only a hundred or so Americans were killed a year, and most of these while playing golf or baseball, was small comfort. We are naked before the sky. There's no hiding from the Other Who delivered the zap which sent Boris Karloff out in the woods to chase children, and then ^{the one which frizzled the hair of} Elsa Lanchester.

Monday morning I gave my first thought to Stuart when the Call Committee started organizing the rescue. Dusty, newly out of the Army, had been prostrated by the ^{Saturday} heat, felt sick Sunday morning, and stayed in camp. He waited through the afternoon. In the night he watched for flashlights on the ridge. In the dawn he hiked out and made the call to Seattle. Monday evening, driving to the end of the Teanaway River road, ^{Cam and I} ~~we~~ discussed the possibilities. Not having spoken to Dusty ourselves, we didn't think about the clouds. In later weeks, of course, climbers who'd been on Rainier told how they marveled at the white castles piled high along the Cascade Crest to the east. Climbers who'd been on Snoqualmie Pass peaks told how the black mass surging from the east sent them on the run downward. I recalled my afternoon on the lawn, playing with the puppy.

Ome and Otto and Cam set out ^{with the rescue gang} for the summit of Stuart, to bring Pablo home. He and I had last climbed three months earlier, on the Grand Persdex Traverse. I remembered the moment in early twilight when he and I lay side by side in the snow, exhausted. Tom had split off on a shortcut and the odds on him were even money. Then Franzl had split off, adjudging Pablo and me to be

cowards, and we'd not have put up a nickel against a million dollars on his chances. Pablo, cheek pillowed in snow, murmured, not to waste energy, "I don't care. All I want is to come home alive from every peak I ever climb."

Tom and Dusty and I stayed with Lardy^x in a meadow the experts thought could be ~~landed in~~ ^{used for a landing} by the Coast Guard helicopter said (by radio) to be underway from Port Angeles. We gathered a heap of dry wood to be torched off when the chopper appeared, and green branches to throw atop to make smoke to show wind direction.

Lardy was reasonably comfortable in the shade of a tree at meadow's edge, half-asleep from Otto's dope, ^{with} bits of food from Tom's plundering ^{close} at hand. Mainly he asked for water, ^{which we} brought by the ^{gallon} ~~quart~~ from Ingalls Creek. Despite Otto's injection of plasma he remained radically dehydrated. Quarts of water had been fried from his body by the first bolt and the hours of ground currents as he lay paralyzed. Even before that, he was, of course, thirsty from climbing half a vertical mile of the West Ridge's hot granite. Afterward there was the descent of the South Wall in the heat of Monday, lowering torso and paralyzed legs by ~~his~~ strength of arms. The worst had been when he ran out of cliffs and had to drag himself on his belly to the creek, where he lay Monday night, until Tom's advance party found him at dawn and built the fire the rest of us saw from Long's Pass.

The meadow was pretty, much to my surprise. I'd ^{restricted} ~~confined~~ my climbing ^{on} ~~the~~ ^{this side of the Cascades} ~~to~~ snow time. I hadn't known there could be flowers in August. Wordsworth and sister Dorothy might have come around the bend in the trail, making nosegays. They might have gazed up the granite ramparts and pondered the relationship of Stuart to the One -- the good (the only) One. Tess

Derbyville might have loitered demurely through the deep green grass by the creek, been enticed to the summit by Thomas Hardy, and been struck by lightning.

She wouldn't have it coming, no more than Pablo and Lardy. Had they arrived on the summit a few minutes earlier they'd have seen the Blackness from the east and gotten well off the tiptop of the second-highest nonvolcanic peak in the state of Washington. Had they been a few minutes longer over breakfast or slower on the ascent they'd have been well below the summit before the first bolt, a direct hit, ~~on the summit~~. As poker players say, you *can't* beat the luck of the draw, ~~can't be beat~~.

None of our bunch quit climbing ~~outright and forever~~ because of that summer. Not even me. I hung on, after it was all over, as long as I had to ^{previously} Christianity. Where else was there to go?

As for Lardy, in weeks he was limping about highland meadows. In the words of Robert Graves:

Greensap of Spring in the young wood a-stir
Will celebrate the Mountain Mother...
I forget cruelty and past betrayal
Careless of where the next bright bolt may fall.

THE PARLEMENT OF THE BEASTS

Chuck and I were talking about mountain trips we'd taken alone. I told of being the year's first hiker up the Dosewallips and meeting a band of elk, a bear, a second bear, two more bears, and looking them in the eye as I never had my dogs, cats, and chickens, and their looking back, and then a momma grouse flew up from the heather to try to claw my eyes out.

He told of the time his pals couldn't leave town until afternoon. He was free in morning and therefore drove alone to the trail, hauled his pack up the switchbacks to the lake, rambled around the meadows, ^{and} ~~then~~ cooked supper at the lakeshore camp.

In dusk, feeling lonesome, he walked out to the lip of the cirque and sat atop a rock buttress, watching for his pals to appear, ~~on the switchbacks,~~ climbing from the valley night.

Something shadowy came. He rose to greet his pals -- and sat back down -- it was a deer. Again. A second deer. Walking the trail in the direction of the lakeshore camp.

Something larger and darker came. He began a happy yell -- and shut his mouth -- it was an elk. Two elk. Three-five-seven elk. Cows. And a bull. Following the deer.

A blackness came. He kept quiet. A black bear. Shambling after the elk, after the deer.

I told Chuck of my suspicion, up the Dosewallips, that the elk and bear had gotten together and discussed the situation and come to a decision about

me. The grouse attack was only the start. In the nick of time I'd lit out for the Model A. He said he had a notion, sitting there on the buttress, that the animals were gathering at the lake to decide what to do about him. As for his pals, ^{he figured} they'd already done it to them.

ONE FELL SWOOP

Rainier aside, Whitehorse was the first mountain whose name I knew, from a week in my early childhood camped at the foot. While the folks fished, I kept watch for the great animal prancing from summit to summit. As much as Rainier, the mountain was a Being. More than Rainier, which seemed as unattainable as the moon, it motivated me to take the Climbing Course.

Having astounded myself in my first full year as a climber by achieving Columbia Crest, the chief objective of my second spring wasn't in question. Further, I would not do the ascent via the easy-plodding back side of the mountain, but via the glacier, 6000 feet straight up from that childhood camp, on the front of the mountain where the horse should have pranced.

Near the summit we intersected boot tracks in the snow, made by a Mountaineer party that had come up the back side. There were also canine tracks, a puzzle until we got to the top and were greeted by a friendly sheep dog, tongue hanging out. The Mountaineers told us the dog, who lived on a farm near the trailhead, had followed them up the trail to Lone Tree Pass. When they entered deep snow and dense cloud and hadn't a notion which way to go, it took the lead and led them unerringly. (Later inquiry revealed the dog had climbed Whitehorse many times, whenever it saw people passing by with ice axes in hand. From this came the generic term, "dog route," subsequently applied to any line of ascent that can be plodded on four feet or two, no hands.)

The summit was satisfaction enough, that May of 1949, and we descended conservatively, mostly plunge-stepping and skating, with a few short standing

glissades. Several Mays later, however, the summit was less an attraction than doing in a single swoop what would be, if the sitting glissade were an Olympic event, the course against which all others on the international circuit would be measured.

Where the glacier curved over and steeply down at the lip of its ^{summit} cirque we assumed the sitting position. We would have to take care to stop before reaching cliffs of the lower cirque. Between here and there a continuous chute dropped three-quarters of a vertical mile.

The snow was ideal -- firm enough for good speed yet soft enough that the butt rode not along the surface of the immovable slope, buffeted and abraded, but above the surface on a soft cushion set in motion by the body. No need for braking with the spike of the ice ax; the cushion accelerated to a wind-in-the-face pace and no faster, held steady by the friction of the cushion's underside against the immovable slope. No technique to perform. No work to do. The mind was free of any responsibility except to watch the white walls of the chute flash by, the cows in the pastures of Darrington town grow larger. The chute curved left, curved right, as esthetic as a bobsled run at St. Moritz.

The mountain got into the spirit. Snow accreted to my magic carpet until it filled the chute from wall to wall, preceded me by a hundred feet, trailed behind me a hundred feet. The hiss of sliding snow grew halfway to a roar, almost drowning out my whooping and hollering.

Whether this was a true avalanche was a fine technical point. The start was strictly my doing. Now, however, the mountain was running the show. I recalled the Commonwealth Basin Snow Practice in May of 1948, Betty's and my

first trip to snow country ^{with} ~~the~~ the Climbing Course. The practice had culminated in an ascent of Lundin, followed by the glissade of the Lundin Chute, a thousand-foot run, the best in the vicinity of Snoqualmie Pass. A thousand feet at one go was too much for Betty. She paused to catch her breath. Out of the fog ~~there~~ came down upon her half a dozen idiot beginners who'd glissaded in a bunch, ~~for the security~~. When their snow cushions amalgamated into one huge and very loud cushion they did what comes naturally to idiot beginners -- they threw away their ice axes and began tumbling ass over teakettle. None was hurt, though all lost their ice axes. Their tons of snow buried Betty and one of their ^{loose} axes caught her in the ribs, earning her a free toboggan ride down Commonwealth Basin to Snoqualmie Pass and a high-speed run with police-siren escort to Harborview Hospital in Seattle.

The idiots in mind, I decided to let my now-gigantic Whitehorse cushion proceed alone, to spew without me over the brink of the lower cirque and hundreds of feet down ^{the cliffs} to Snow Gulch. I ceased whooping and hollering and rammed my ax shaft ~~down~~ into the magic carpet ^{toward} ~~the~~ unmoving mountain. The mountain was having too much fun and flatly said, "No, sir, we are in this together for the full ride."

I rolled over and over and off the cushion. "Sez you," sez I.

Ever afterward, when driving by the cows of Darrington town and looking to the heights, it's not a prancing animal I'm watching for.

CROSSING OVER

Eyes opened and let in brown cliffs, pink glaciers, emerald meadows.
Eyes closed and the dawn entered the dreaming.

Eyes opened and let in a brilliant blueness of sky and a rainbow of flowers.
Eyes closed and high morning entered the dreaming.

Into it, also, came the softness of humus cushioning the body, scents of heather bells and hemlock needles inches from the nose, songs of chickadees and buzzes of bees, the muted roar of distant waterfalls modulated louder and softer by the winds, and the cool of these winds and the heat of the sun, alternating.

Eyes opened and closed throughout the day, letting in the peaks -- Magic, Mixup, Triplets, Johannesburg, Sahale, Forbidden, Eldorado. On the inside, these mingled with peaks from other places and other years in the Cascades and Olympics and Canadian Rockies and Selkirks, and with ^{the peaks of} a certain strange range known only in a recurring dream, private mountains free of public logic, ever in a state of becoming.

The eyes opened and wouldn't close again. The mind was compelled, at last, to recognize the existence of an exterior reality, to remember hotel rooms and motel rooms in faraway cities, the fear of dying there, alone, the lost spirit never able to find its way home, doomed to eternity in a subway on Manhattan Island, a Bible college in Nampa, a bookstore in Spokane, a tavern in Salt Lake City ^{that} ~~servicing~~ ^{ed} nothing more ^{invigorating} ~~useful~~ ^{3.2 percent} than "Mormon Kool-Aid." At summer's end, with hair cut and whiskers shaved and feet washed and suit and tie donned, again I'd be in those faraway cities, dreaming bad dreams.

Had the day lasted forever it would have made a very satisfactory Heaven. It had only one flaw, ^{the one} shared by ~~any, including~~ God. If truly perfect, it would not have ended.

Would it be possible, by force of will, to keep the body inert the several hours remaining to night? Would the body then permit the dream to resume? Said the Greeks, a person never can cross the same river twice.

Trapper Nelson on back, ice ax in hand, dried apples (breakfast-lunch) in mouth, I ascended the heather flank of Mixup Arm to a grassy buttress jutting over the darkening valley of the Stehekin River. Far above, still in the sun, lay my destination, Cache Col, beneath the rosy-bright horn of Magic Mountain. I clambered a rock ladderway down the buttress to the glacier, ^{into} ~~shivering as I~~ ~~entered~~ the ice-chilled air ^{of} ~~in~~ the dark shadow of Mixup Mountain.

The snows that from a distance had appeared purely white proved to be heavily speckled with dots of pollen, bits of lichen and moss, ~~and~~ creeping beetles and long-leggity spiders. I scooped up a snowball to chew, to rehydrate the apples in my belly. It wiggled with worms. ~~Some of the worms were quite large, and some were quite small.~~

I estimated approximately one worm per square inch of glacier surface; the glacier was about one square mile, or 5280 times 5280 square feet, times 144 for square inches; I couldn't work that out in my head but it was a decidedly wormy glacier. How many algae did a worm eat in a day (or rather, a night, since it's after the sun goes off the surface that they squirm up from the depths to feed)? Before and after the worms' supper, how many were there of the green and brown and black and blood-red ("watermelon snow") algae? How many beetles and spiders lived on this seemingly sterile icefield, and how

much of whatever it was they ate? How many pollens and seeds of how many species of plants were available here to serve how many breakfasts to the snowbirds who would arrive in morning with swarms of hungry mouths?

I kicked steps in waves of suncups, ascending a steep snowfinger that poked up from the main body of the glacier into the cliffs. At the top, on the uppermost crest of snow, a few blows of the ax leveled a boot platform, takeoff for a leap across the moat onto the rocks. A quick scramble took me to the col.

At the instant of my arrival the red-orange ember of a sun slid behind a rib of Johannesburg, submerging col and me in shadow. The bold spurs and hanging glaciers of Formidable, beyond the gulf of the Middle Fork Cascade River, remained bright in daylight. So too, on my side of the valley, did the cliffs of Magic and Hurrayup, as well as the dot of water on the shelf beneath them, Kool-Aid Lake.

A snowpatch at the col trickled meltwater. A patch of grass looked soft. The ascent from Cascade Pass might have given the body enough of a workout for it to permit sleeping, perchance dreaming. There was no objective requirement to proceed farther. On the other side of the trailhead I was commanded to be in a specific city each and every day and if I was not there the telephones in New York began ringing up and down five Western states and three Canadian provinces to run me to ground. On this side of the trailhead, though, wherever I was, that's where I was supposed to be.

I looked back to Cascade Pass. Down its east slopes ran headwater brooks of the Stehekin -- a name meaning "the way through" -- as for thousands of years it had been, through the mountains west of Lake Chelan. Down the west

slopes of the pass ran headwaters of the North Fork Cascade, tributary to the Skagit, my connection to the city, to the hotels and motels and telephones across the continent, to the bad dreams of fall and winter and spring.

I stood in shadow; inches above my head, however, the air trembled with *potential.*
~~possibility.~~ My motion spooked a stag browsing huckleberry bushes. He ~~leapt~~ *leaped* straight up -- out of the shadow -- and burst into flames. Tawny body and magnificent antlers fell back and were extinguished. He rebounded, soared out over the Middle Fork valley, and fell from my sight, diving as bright as a falling star into the night.

I had no choice except to cross over.

BEYOND MAGIC

The little balcony-shelf lay warm and welcoming in the sun, a cozy nook of moraine and tundra ringing the dot of water fed by a field of snow. But as I descended meadows and scree from Cache Col the night climbed from the Middle Fork valley and drowned Kool-Aid Lake. ^{Sadly I watched the} ~~The~~ edge of day retreat [^] up the cliffs of Magic and Hurrayup.

I dropped the Trapper Nelson in heather and grass beside the trickle-creek of the lake outlet. The air was warm, and still, and silent. The only large sound in the world was the ^{massed water-falling} ~~scores of waterfalls~~ from hanging glaciers on the horseshoe of peaks between Formidable on the south and Johannesburg on the north, ~~and the river they formed far below.~~ Had they been making a sound before my ear came over the top of Cache Col? Did I -- here -- exist? The only evidence was my own observation of self. Doesn't the law require a corroborating witness?

The nearest one available was beyond a serrate ridge of rock and ice, beyond Cache Col, in my past -- and future? Always before on solo expeditions I'd kept open the umbilicus of a valley trail. Never had I put a mountain, a glacier, across my line of retreat. The sunlight sliding upward off the summit of Hurrayup was a prison door clanging shut.

The first trail night of my life, at Camp Mystery, we slept under trees. The second, at Home Lake, we spread our bags in grass naked to the sky. A breeze blew against my right cheek, reversed and blew against my left. Breezes blew against right cheek and left, collided, became a dust devil whirling a column of dirt and sand and twigs across the meadow. That was all right. There were

two dozen of us Scouts swimming, water-wrestling, laughing, clambering atop rocks, unrolling toilet paper in streamers that ~~drifted sinuously~~^{snaked out} over the valley. There were too many of us, too noisy, for a person to be bothered by the air, whatever it did.

The air here, at Kool-Aid, was squashed inert by the heavy weight of the end-of-July North Pacific High. The lake mirrored the darkening peaks and the emerging peaks without the ~~smallest~~^{least} ripple.

A fire would have stirred the air, made friendly sounds, and poked a bright hole in the night. However, winter snows piled too deep on the balcony for trees to attain any size, permitted only a fringe of gnarled hemlocks at the brink of the valley cliffs and a scattering of shrubs in crannies on the peaks' cliffs; the meager amount of dead wood they'd shed over the years long since had been burnt up by climbers.

I crawled in the bag and opened a book. The flashlight lit pages, my eyes moved along lines of print, my fingers turned leaves, with not the least communication to the brain ~~which~~^{because it} was fully occupied by information incoming from elsewhere.

The peaks were radiating their day's accumulation of heat to the stars, the air around the summits was cooling, growing denser and heavier, and flowing downslope to the valleys, which held heat better and thus formed reservoirs of relative low pressure. My skin barely felt the flow, yet it surely was true the air had come alive. My ears heard no sound, though. They were listening to the whisper of the outlet creek, the remote chorus of river and waterfalls, the clucking and peeping of a mama ptarmigan and chicks nested in a heather clump. My ears were awaiting other sounds.

My eyes were focused on the book but saw it not. They were keeping watch sideways. Off to the left a lump loomed -- the flashlight identified it as a boulder. Off to the right stood a line of dwarfs -- the hemlocks at the balcony edge.

I put the book away and confronted the night. The stars were so many and bright they lit, if dimly, the sprawl of the Middle Cascade Glacier, heading in the Spider-Formidable Col, and the icefalls of the hanging glaciers. Starlight outlined the horseshoe of peaks enclosing the valley. The cliffs ^{of Hurry up} rose so abruptly from the lake there was no eastern sky; Formidable and Johannesburg left little southern or northern sky; most of the sky was ~~directly overhead and~~ westward, crammed full of stars arching down to the horizon. Even with Dad and Mother in the front seat of the Plymouth, looking at that many stars had put the fear in me. Even with three dozen other climbers following my crampon prints and willow wands up through the night on the Emmons Glacier, toward the summit of Mt. Rainier, there was a moment at 12,000 feet when I chanced to lift my eyes from the glacier surface and saw that the stars are not pinpricks in a velvet curtain that let through the blessed light of Heaven, that they are Hellfires in the black infinity that in the end will gobble us all up.

I took off my glasses; so much for the damn stars, ^{let them} merged into a single blur. I closed my eyes and composed myself for sleep. An alarm rang. I sat bolt upright, groped for glasses, fumbled for flashlight, and swung it around the compass -- to boulders that ^{long ago} had tumbled from the cliffs or been

dropped by the glacier, to hemlock shrubs and heather knolls. Caught in the beam they were sharp-edged and fixed. Released by a flick of the switch to darkness, they dissolved in liquid night. Even then, by staring straight-on, my eye could hold them rigidly in place. But those at the corners of my eye floated loose. What of those behind my back? And when I looked there, in my front?

These were not the hashish fiends who pursued me down the Dosewallips trail to the Model A at Constance Creek. I wasn't sure which I preferred.

BEYOND THE RED LEDGE

The stars above Hurryup blinked out, boulders were boulders again, trees were trees, and I slept, I dreamed -- until the Sunball came a-roaring over the ridge like a ten-ton truck, ~~and baked me out of the sack.~~ Ptarmigan chicks twittered through the meadow, taking care to stay in mama's shadow, she with the red eyes rolling and ^{the} tongue hanging out. The vital fluids of my blood and flesh began vapping from every pore. Next the fat would be rendered to a smear of grease on the rocks. Then the bones would be kilned to a white dust in the grass. I set a pair of Heat Tabs under a pot to boil water for cocoa and thought better of it. Strike a match and the whole shebang might go up in a puff of smoke. I breakfasted on fig bars and a pot of Kool-Aid.

To the south a large shadow lay close under the nameless^e peak neighboring Hurryup. By the time I reeled there through waves of heat radiating from moraines and rockslides the shadow edge had moved up from the meadows onto a snowfield. I kicked steps up softening white slop to cool air and stood at happy rest, breathing deeply to lower the temperature of my body core. The pursuing fury enveloped me. I kicked steps higher, far into the shadow, where the snow was hard as concrete -- and, being steep, dangerous as a rock cliff.

Mountaineering: The Freedom of the Hills had come off the press in June. The book represented a quarter-century of the club's Climbing Course and a half-century of mountaineering by The Mountaineers. For me it was thirteen years ~~of my life~~ as a climber, eleven years as a teacher in the Course, and seven years as planner and promoter, of the book, then editor, A summation by a group, it was a peroration for me, because by the finish I'd reverted to my earlier

status. I came to this shadowed slope of hard, steep snow as a hiker -- a solitary, at that, in flagrant violation of the Climbing Code I'd spent so many years enforcing.

A climber must ~~reach~~^{achieve} the summit to extract the full goodness from a peak. In the last several years I had learned (re-learned) to extract the goodness from below. On this trip I'd traversed beneath Mixup and Magic and Hurryup with no lust to ~~plant~~^{arrogantly stomp} my boots on their tops, more than satisfied to touch their bottoms, tenderly.

I ascended the shadow^{to} near the cliffs at the uppermost limit of the snow. The end of the line? A streak of iron-stained rock ran from the top of the snowfield horizontally across the cliffs. Bless my soul, it was none other than the Red Ledge! Tom and Lardy and company had given the name seven years earlier while doing the second traverse of the Cascade Crest south from Cascade Pass to Dome Peak; ~~a route~~^{the route} they'd named the Ptarmigan Traverse for the club whose members had done it first, in 1938.

When a solitary attempts^t a feat and chickens out, nobody ever need know. I could ~~scrape~~ kick and chop a bit closer to the ledge for more intimate inspection. At the point I felt uneasy I'd quit. ~~There was no one there.~~ Nobody was watching my knees for the sewing machine.

A slender arm of snow reached out from the main field, the end resting on the ledge. Should a person wish to get on the ledge he'd have to chop two dozen steps across an ice-hard, near-vertical lane too narrow for a self-arrest. A single misstep and just-like-that he'd be off the snow and in the air, falling thirty feet to the first bounce on rocks of the moat, then bounce-bounce-bounce

down under the snow to permanent darkness. In a week or so someone would wonder about the Trapper Nelson and sleeping bag at Kool-Aid Lake, connect them to the Herz-rental, company-fleet Chivvy at the end of the Cascade River road and the wife and daughters, dogs and cats, waiting ~~back~~ on Cougar Mountain. Friends would search the balcony, check the summit registers, peer into crevasses. They'd have no reason to crawl down in the moat and snoop around under the snowfield. They'd shrug and say, "Well, where^over he is, that's where he's supposed to be."

The two dozen steps took me back to the South Face of The Tooth in 1947, Columbia Crest in 1948, the summit of Sir Donald in 1950. Beyond the Red Ledge I felt, as in Luna Cirque and on the Illecillawaet Névé, and all too few other times in my hundreds of climbs, the veritable freedom.

~~My blood was up.~~ Defying the Sunball, I angled up broken rock to the ridge crest and strode briskly south between valleys of the Middle Fork on my right, the West Fork of Flat Creek on my left. Close ahead lay the Spider-Formidable Col, a dandy spot for lunch.

I'd forgotten what Tom and company had told me, that the correct route south from the Red Ledge is a descending traverse to the Middle Cascade Glacier and then up it to the col. A week later I did exactly that, and climbed Spider to boot. Today, however, I was stopped by an impassable cleft in the ridge.

Retreating north, I marveled at my backsliding -- to ~~my~~ balancing wife and kids and dogs and cats against apotheosis. The raging maniac of a Sunball was at ^{Fault. It} had infected me. I knotted a handkerchief at the corners, fitted it on my head, and stuffed snow ~~under~~ ^{beneath} to dribble icewater over my scalp and down my neck and face.

At a last patch I scooped up a basketball-sized snowball, carried it to the summit of "Red Ledge Peak," and sat to eat snow, wash my face with snow, and scan the horizons. From Forbidden I'd photographed this area in a play of light and shadow beneath a frontal march of cumulus clouds. Moment by moment the peaks had changed expressions, displayed the ^{varied} ~~different~~ aspects of their personalities. Today the peaks were so crushed by the North Pacific High, so bleached ~~out~~ by the Sunball, they were lifeless rock and ice.

The Sunball was jealous, harsh, tyrannical, more dreadful than the Hellfires of the stars It had extinguished at dawn. This was the Sunball of the Holy Land, of John the Baptist, who strode off into his stony wilderness and got Sun-struck.

If not monotheism, what?

The night.

I could ^{safely} think about it now. (To think of a thing in the night is to summon it, even create it.) I couldn't think rationally, of course. The Sunball would set my brains to frying. I'd apply the countermeasure and the snowball would freeze my brains. Fry and freeze, fry and freeze -- that's craziness.

Crazy! Were this mountain a university, and I the faculty and student body, should I as the former address myself as the latter in my capacity as professor of philosophy, professor of abnormal psychology, professor of poetry, or football coach? I was crazy last night, crazy the day before, and was gonna go crazy tonight like I'd never been crazy before.

Cache Col and crossed

In the summit rocks I found an eagle feather. I'd crossed/the Red Ledge and came within an ace of crossing the Spider-Formidable Col. I stuck the feather in my handkerchief hat and called it macaroni.

AMONG THE MANY

The balcony was still cooking when I returned to Kool-Aid Lake. Above, in the Magic-Hurryup Col, an admirable block of rock sheltered a ^{body-size} patch of coolness, ~~exactly body-size~~. The view eastward was new ~~to me~~, down the snow couloir to the cirque of Trapper Lake and out the Stehekin valley to the ranges above Lake Chelan. There -- and west and north and south -- lay some of my 200 climbs of the past dozen years. ~~All this was mine. Which is to say, I was all mine.~~

In a month the whiskers would come off, the suit and tie go on. The mills of man, which grind far faster than those of the gods, would swallow me up again. Soon ~~I was grimly aware~~ they'd spit me out again, as they had seven times in these dozen years ^{of the} ~~with~~ 200 climbs. The bosses weren't to blame. Huckleberry, Marmot Pass, the Greywolf, Columbia Crest -- they'd made me a mountain bum, cousin to the ski bums of Colorado, the beach bums of California, the desert bums of the Holy Land. What did John the Baptist do for a living? Gather snakes and scorpions and grubs? There was a menu to ^{excite} ~~stimulate~~ a houseful of kids and cats and dogs.

When the boots went off and the underarm deodorant on, I'd have to worry about that, again. Not now. On the other side of Cache Col and Cascade Pass, ^{lay} the land ~~beyond the treeline~~ ruled by Lord Telephone.

Here the enemy was the Sunball. ^{All} ~~That~~ I'd sought at Kool-Aid Lake was another good day's sleep, ~~as at Cascade Pass~~. The Madness in the sky had driven me across the Red Ledge, backward into the madness ~~in me~~ that had been my life these dozen years, backward almost to something ^{resembling a primitive} ~~very primitive~~ Christianity.

The Sunball lowered toward Johannesburg. Its rays, passing through the gases and vapors exhaled by wilderness forests and, farther west, the fumes spewed by freeways and pulpmills, ~~was~~ shifted toward the red end of the spectrum and had barely any heat. The Sunball wizened to a cold old tangerine. I loitered down to the lake, pausing to examine blossoms of Indian paintbrush and elephanthead and scores of flowers whose names I didn't know. I lit Heat Tabs to simmer a pot of pea soup and Spam, ^{soaked the soup up in} ~~dipped in~~ circles of Sailor Boy pilot bread, and washed it all down with Kool-Aid.

Peaks that had been flattened by too much Sunball ~~light~~ now had regained their third dimension, showed their ^{complex} faces, half ~~in~~ ^{of} day, half ~~in~~ ^{of} night. Shadows were forming behind hemlock shrubs, boulders, and me.

Two words used to send me unfailingly to the dictionary:

"Immanent -- living, remaining, or operating within; inherent. In theology, present throughout the universe: said of God."

"Imminent -- likely to happen without delay, impending, threatening: said of danger, misfortune, evil."

Finally I'd quit going to the dictionary, taken the two into my theology as a single word.

Near summits faded from pink to gray. Those to the west were black against the furnace colors of the horizon. Beyond the bands of blue-green-yellow-pink-orange-scarlet, way out there on the ^{unseen} Pacific Ocean, it still was day. Here the stars were erupting. Each was mightier than our Sunball, the One that had proved mortal after all.

Rejoice! Rejoice! The Sunball is dead! Long live the night!

Yet **It** is, or was, after all, our Sunball. Poor dead little thing.

Those stars are not ours.

The night is ours. We are the night's. The night is not One, but many. I belonged to ~~the~~^{this} night, but did I belong? Was I accepted, or rejected?

What if one were to pray? Not aloud -- definitely not aloud. And not in words because some of them might accidentally be Names, their Owners thus summoned (even created). Lie in the tundra beside the lake, as formerly in the forest by Hidden Creek and on the beach of Puget Sound, and not think a prayer -- be one.

Would the immanent-imminent listen? Would They care? Did They know that I cared about the ice worms and beetles and spiders and algae, the heather and hemlocks and Indian paintbrush and elephant~~head~~^{head}, the sn^wbirds and ptarmigan and the eagle whose feather I wore? Would They give me any points for that?

THE LORD OF THE FLIES

Had I known how ^{to do it}, when the brown slime oozed over the summit ridge of Logan (such a cloud as never I had seen, not a cloud of Earth), I'd have made the sign of the Cross. Even before the cloud abruptly exploded in flames darting in every direction my hair was on end and heart racing.

It poured down the cliffs of Logan ~~to the cirque floor~~ like a reservoir when the dam has burst, drowⁿing the valley from wall to wall, darkening to a deathly gray and blotting out peaks and glaciers and meadows. The opaque front rushed toward us as inexorably as a blowout flood. For long seconds our camp remained eerily still. Then the ~~front~~ front hit with hurricane force, bellied out our tarp and deluged us with sideways-blowing rain. I had a thought in my mind. Becky, nine years old, screamed it aloud: "WE'RE GOING TO BE KILLED!"

Bolts struck close on every side. Simultaneously and continuously ~~our~~ we ~~eyes~~ were blinded and ~~ears~~ deafened. The white waterfalls which gave this place the name of Many Waterfalls Camp swelled to brown floods whose roar merged with the thunderclaps. Chunks of mountain broke loose from Goode's wall and they, too, thundered as they fell down the mile-high face, striking sparks as bright as lightning. To Becky's prediction I silently added, "At least."

Lightning never has dwelt amicably in my house of naturalism. It's too seemingly purposeful, sentient. The dread example was the timing of the first bolt on Stuart in 1952: Lardy and Pablo were permitted to attain the summit, Lardy to stretch out the rope to the full eighty feet between them, Pablo to sign the register and stow the book in the metal box and stand up straight to follow Lardy -- and exactly then, WHAM.

If in the world there was an individual more scared of lightning than I, it was our sheep dog with the piebald eyes, Natasha. Let electricity be on the loose anywhere in the county and she knew it. At home on Cougar Mountain she'd break the First Commandment and leap on our bed. In the high country, the family sleeping bags all in a row under the tarp, she'd walk back and forth across our faces to wake us up so we could scan the horizon for flashes, wait for rumbles, and begin the countdown between flash and bang by which one measures the approach of doom.

The bed-jumping and face-walking had begun, this summer, months earlier than ever before. By August Tasha's nerves were so fragile we'd left her home from this trip in the care of a dogsitter-nurse. That was a mercy. As we got off the Lady of the Lake in Stehekin -- lightning. Our first night on the trail, at Grizzly Creek -- lightning. The second evening, at Many Waterfalls Camp, while we were drinking our soup -- lightning. Then, as the rain quit and we were about to emerge from the tarp to cook Krap Dinner and dried spinach, the brown slime oozed and there was lightning the entire night and far into morning.

Throughout the summer the sun, between storms, pulsed relentless energy down through a veil of those funny clouds no mountaineer laughs at. Each purgation cooled the atmosphere only momentarily. The Great Heat Pump immediately commenced building a new head of steam, sucking up the storm's moisture and the sunstruck Earth's BTU's, brewing a stew that disgusted the lungs and blocked the outpouring of perspiration from the pores, raising the body temperature to fever level.

The worst summer in memory for lightning was also the worst in memory for deer flies. The oven atmosphere spawned them by the millions, the trillions, the googols. They crowded their usual habitat in middle-elevation forests beyond capacity, spilled down to low valley forests, overflowed into alpine meadows. The heat that wilted humans frenzied the flies. From dawn to dusk the mountain world was loud with their nagging whine as they probed every cubic inch of Creation for blood. After a drink they squatted on salal and huckleberry leaves; to brush against a trailside bush was to be soiled by shiny, sticky excrement.

On the way to Grizzly Creek, goaded to desperation, I left Betty and Becky and four-year-old Claudia behind -- so far behind that when I at last had to stop and wait there was time for the news of a sitting duck to spread far and wide. The ground around me quickly was dotted with/corpses, soon was almost solidly blackened, and I saw myself buried in a black cone, arms protruding and flailing, gradually lowering under the weight of black myriads whose guts shone red with my blood. A shriek cut through the whining. It was Penny, returning on the run, in tears, from Grizzly Creek, where I'd told her to wait for us. Ten years old, a wilderness pedestrian nine years, not in this damned summer, not in her life, had she known how bad things could get when the Lord set His mind to it.

Thomas Hardy never met our American deer fly and likely never saw, in all his somber England, a brown slime of a horned cloud. Yet had he been told of them, he'd have shrugged, "What did you expect?"

I wished that Betty and I and the three girls might have had Wordsworth and sister Dorothy as guests under our tarp at Many Waterfalls Camp, that I might have outroared the thunder to quote back at him:

...Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth...
Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her...

A NOBLE GIN

A person may have times in his sleep, perhaps the same each night, when he wakes, waits, expects -- what? It was in the "middle watches" that the ghost revealed himself to Hamlet. Children may see at that hour cowled monks standing over their beds. Adults going to the bathroom avoid looking in mirrors. The Church breviary puts the matins -- first prayers of the antemeridian -- at midnight; nowadays they more often are spoken at daybreak, too late for those who, in the hour immediately gone by, came sharply awake to die "in their sleep."

In the seasons of the year there are similar moments of suspense. City people are too encased in cubicles, static or mobile, to feel them, to think about the ultimate source of the fuel for their furnace and microwave and television and automobile engine. When the connection between sun and man was closer, folks paid attention.

The Keltic calendar began with November 1, halfway between the autumn equinox and the winter solstice; October 31 was "Old Year's Night," when spirits of earth and sky cavorted in observance of the turn from fall to winter. The Church redefined the spirits as witches and made them the opening act for All Saints Day.

The Germans converted by Saint Walpurgis in the eighth century may or may not have celebrated Walpurgisnacht, the eve of May Day, halfway between the vernal equinox and the summer solstice, a time when flowers are their gayest and pigs are putting on fat. The spirits-witches held another party then,

notoriously on Brocken Peak in the Hartz Mountains. One of the bunch commonly was seen by mountain travelers throughout the year, both locally and elsewhere in high places; the Specter of the Brocken ~~was seen~~^{appeared} to Whympfer shortly after his companions on the first ascent of the Matterhorn fell to their deaths.

The winter solstice is observed even by city people, especially while stalled in a commute-hour traffic jam on the icy freeway. Once safely home they may reflect that the sun has spent six months dying and who knows if this time it isn't for good. They may load up on mead by a blazing Yule log, hold a Saturnalia, or go to midnight mass.

The most poignant turning point for a wilderness pedestrian is the autumn equinox. Only a few stray flowers have not gone to seed, the blueberries have been frostbitten and are turning mushy and wrinkled, meadow ponds ice up by morning, and the next cloud that rolls over the ridge may be snow. Soon the high life on the cols and peaks will be ending. Shortly the dreary sound of yodeling will be pouring from loudspeakers on the ski hills.

Summer was gone as Ted and I crossed the Sauk River on a footlog and turned up the old miners' trail, built to get to the ore with no superfluous switchbacks, gaining 1500 feet in the first mile. A few days earlier the loggers had torched off slashfires in clearcuts from end to end of western Washington, legally permitted to do so by the seeping inland of ocean moisture. Smoke and vapors had intermingled to drown the Cascades in a stagnant miasma.

Trees of the forest through which we climbed were ancient and giant, but too gnarled and scarred by fire and storm and avalanche to be worth logging.

The canopy of branches was so dense that not for weeks had a shaft of sun penetrated to the forest floor; in the dank shadows flourished a garden of fairy fruits, white as bones, gaudy as an alchemist's pot of poisons.

Big trees yielded to scattered clumps of stunted mountain hemlock and Alaska cedar. We traversed the ~~mountain~~ trail along the wall of Weden Creek valley, in and out of waterfall gorges, past dumps of mining garbage so old as to have become worth an archeologist's plundering. The trail ascended^e gradually from bench to bench in heather and rock. The higher we climbed the dimmer the views. Color film would have been a waste; the peaks of the Monte Cristo area to our east were the black and white of a winter dusk. The ear hoped for a bird but the only sound was icewater tumbling from glaciers and snowfields. We kept our voices low, not to awake echoes.

The trail notched through a low rib into a basin and ended in rock and snow, patches of tundra, and tiny and twisted and tormented trees. A human standing upright seemed very tall and vulnerable. Above the cirque basin we barely could make out Gothic Peak, named by a climber of thirty-odd years before (or a miner of sixty-odd years before?) for a fancied resemblance to a cathedral. (Subsequently, for purposes of a guidebook, I named the place Gothic Basin. I had in mind not a church but the Gothic novels of the late eighteenth century; my favorite was The Horrid Mysteries.)

The architecture was far older than Gothic, was totally Pleistocene -- ice-gouged, ice-plucked, ice-scooped, ice-polished, ice-scratched, ice-littered, ice-cold. Only recently had the local glacier retreated to the upper reaches of the cirque. The landscape there^efore was exactly that of Ted's and my ancestral

homelands a dozen millenia ago, when our relatives were running away from cave bears and hunting the woolly mammoth, were watching the sun die daily and annually, listening closely to the voices of wind and thunder and rivers, and sitting around campfires making up theologies.

A tarp rigged on a centerline strung between two blocks of fallen-down mountain gave shelter for the night -- or the illusion of shelter -- or would when we crawled under it, into sleeping bags, and pulled the hoods over our heads to shut out the night. Meanwhile the fog was thickening, to blot out Gothic Peak, then the shrubs on the buttress above camp, then the buttress, then the icewater pond beside camp, and then -- when he or I went to gather wood -- Ted.

The large lake above us in the cirque was absolutely barren, so no fishermen ever came. Climbers did the scrambles to the summits of Gothic and Del Campo on day trips from the valley. The miners had been dead longer than Ted and I had been alive. The supply of well-seasoned wood consequently was abundant; the accumulated sunshine of a century awaited only a match to riot into flame; there'd be little left when we broke camp -- to paraphrase Louis XV, "Après nous le Primus."

We had come here to explore the basin, ascend cols and peaks, examine rocks of the sedimentary-igneous contact zone, poke amid rusting and rotting artifacts of the prospectors. That was tomorrow. Tonight was ~~dedicated to~~ our annual observance of the autumn equinox, the closest thing to church either of ^{us} had known since youth. The superb old wood erupted a "John Muir fire" of the sort he once set on an Alaskan mountain top, burning acres of forest as he capered and cackled at the edge of the flames. The blaze melted a cheery hemisphere of fossil sunlight in the gray twilight. A patch of soft turf was our lounge. A table-flat glacial erratic was our bar, whereon we

set out in a neat row the bottles of gin and vermouth, the sliced lemon and stuffed green olives and cocktail onions, the pickled herring and cocktail crackers and blue cheese and mixed nuts.

We had heard it said, "There are good martinis and bad martinis, but even a bad martini is pretty darn good." This proved true even when drunk from a Sierra Club cup and, lacking shaved ice, substituting granular snow from the patch edging the pond.

The time had come for Ted and me to speak of many things: Whether, sixteen autumns ago, as we ascended the final slopes of Komg Kulshan in swirling snowflakes, the shaft of sunlight piercing through to form a bright circle on the dark glacier had been meant for the Second Coming, and if so, why Nobody ^{CAME} showed up. Whether, in the hour before midnight, as we were descending the North Peak of Index, I said, looking down to star sparkles in Lake Serene, "I want to die," as he claimed, or as I knew I'd said, "It would be easy to die now."

Eyes lifting from the fire saw that the circle of brightness had shrunk, that nullity began in the heather just the other side of the flames. Sounds of distant rivers and nearby waterfalls were muted ^{by the fog}, silenced by the fire's ~~whispering~~ snap-crackling. There might not be, anymore, anything outside the hemisphere of firelight. Ted and I might be the last survivors of a planet drowned in chill, still fog.

Yet gin and vermouth are fossil sunlight, too. Taken internally, they dispel agues of the soul, they transmute black bile to red blood. We were of good cheer. I stood up for another trip to the bar, turned my back to the

THE ANCHOR

By the time I arrived at a confrontation with the Infinite and the Eternal, my family inheritance of church timbers and crossbraces, walls and doors, furniture and finery had been so stripped away by Wycliffe and Henry VIII, Puritans and Covenanters, John Wesley and Ralph Waldo Emerson as to leave me stark naked under the stars. What would it have been like to be able, amidst spiritual travail, to seek counsel from a priest schooled by Aquinas? To be sustained by sacraments as irrational as Creation itself and by the measure of human life virtually as venerable? To wear a medal giving me the protection of a saint? To say catechism and Hail Mary and Paternoster? To unburden my load of sins in confession and take my spanking and be done with them? To know how to make quick little magic signs? To be buffered from the unexplainable by the weighty mass of an international bureaucracy that has lasted longer than the Roman Empire and Holy Roman Empire and British Empire combined?

To be sure, the question I asked as a child in a theater in Lowell, "Mother, what's a Pope?" never has had a satisfactory answer on this side of the Atlantic, even for Catholics. Also, having once torn down my supernatural superstructure, I'd have trouble rebuilding, particularly with such materials as bits of the True Cross, bones of the Apostles, the Shroud of Turin, water an Italian saint regularly turns to vino, and roadside images of the Virgin that cure old Irish women of the lumbago.

Yet I have known intelligent people who could distill from the superstition and the rigamarole a holy essence. Though they might deny it, their Church has a public face put on to satisfy the simple needs of the masses who

could not understand anything more complicated, and the secret face known only to initiates. These latter-day gnostics can ~~talk~~^{discuss} the Thrones and Powers of the Great Chain of Being with as little embarrassment as particle physicists ~~do~~^{do} ~~discuss~~ the charm and beauty of their quarks. Neither the Einsteins nor the Popes have any notion what It is really about. Both use symbols to represent the Unknowable, ~~they feel a deep need to worship~~. The masses believe the symbols are It and are content, and no harm done. The gnostics view the symbols as inadequate but honest attempts to reflect the ineffable beauty of It. Beauty is Truth; Truth, Beauty; that is all ye know and all ye need to know. A gnostic Christian doesn't even have to be a supernaturalist, any more than a particle physicist must be an atheist.

A boy of a certain age bitterly resents the whisperings of a gaggle of girls, suspecting ~~they're~~ they're talking about sex, which is ninety percent female business unknowable to boys even after they become men, husbands, fathers. Exactly so does a stripped-down, uncluttered Protestant feel around Catholics.

In youth, the future is long, pregnant with riches waiting to be created. In age, the past is long, abounding in riches waiting to be accepted. Within that past lies a person's only chance at a semblance of immortality. Only there can ~~the~~ the individual self ^{be merged} into a whole which has outlasted centuries and millenia of individual mortalities.

A nation might serve. Rome seems to have worked quite well. Hitler tried it with the Thousand Year Reich. Britain perhaps would satisfy me were it my actual rather than my sentimental home. At barely 200 years of age, America rates no feelings deeper than patriotism.

A village could be ideal if the stone fences dated from the Great Pestilence and the roads from the Picts, if the churchyard held the remains of great-great-etc. grandparents and in the surrounding countryside were the barrows of Saxon nobles and Danish berserkers, dolmen of the Kelts, and -- buried deep in peatbogs -- mummified Iberians.

Immigrants to the New World are cut off from their Old World villages, from the long histories and longer prehistories and myths. That leaves the travelers very little except the religions they carried over the seas. For me that would necessarily be Christianity; 2000 years ought to be an ample enough chunk of time for a person to anchor to.

THE EASTERN JESUS

Arius theorized an eternity when the Son was not, that he was begotten by a lonesome Creator, and that the Incarnation was the dwelling of the Logos in the human body of Christ. Arius was driven out of Alexandria and condemned by a Church council.

Emperor Constantine, having adopted the Church as the foundation of his imperial bureaucracy, was upset to see it quaking. He convened an ecumenical council which produced the Nicene Creed, stipulating that the Only-begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, was of the same substance as the Father.

Semi-Arians felt "same substance" was too strong and a council deposed the Nicene leader, Athanasius, who was banished to Gaul. Arius was readmitted to communion, which he died too ~~soon~~ ^{quickly} to enjoy.

Athanasius was restored to his see; then expelled through the influence of Arianizers at the court of Emperor Constantius II; restored by one council and deposed by another; restored again; attacked by soldiers and driven to refuge with the desert monks of Egypt.

The moderate anti-Nicene faction preferred "like substance" to "same substance." The utter Arians -- the extremist Anomoeans -- denied even a likeness. A temporizing party, the Homoeans, omitted the substance while asserting the likeness. To quote a Gibbonistic historian, "There was a mêlée of councils, which provoked the pagan jibe that the imperial post-horse service was crippled by bishops rushing to and fro."

elaborated by the Constantinople Creed.

The Nicene Creed was restored, ^{restored} But so, too, was paganism, by Emperor Julian (the Apostate). However, he soon died and the bishops never got off horseback.

When Origen put forth the doctrine that God is invisible, incorporeal, and incomprehensible, one among the swarm of fanatical monks living in the desert outside Alexandria wept that "they have taken away my God" and pronounced a creed of Anthropomorphism. Theophilus stirred up a synod against Origen and sent troops to attack a settlement of Origenistic monks, who fled to Constantinople and the protection of St. John Chrysostom. Synods here and synods there issued denunciations of each other until a violent earthquake so alarmed Emperor Arcadius he ordered them to quit.

Nestorius of Constantinople insisted on the distinction of two natures, the Divine and the human, indissolubly conjoined in Christ. Cyril of Alexandria declared for the indissoluble union of the two natures in a single Person. Rival councils engaged in a spate of condemnations and depositions.

Eutyches of Constantinople maintained that the human nature assumed by God the Son was absorbed into the Divine nature; he was condemned for this belief, called Monophysitism. Amid a general uproar the Council of Chalcedon confirmed the creeds of Nicaea and Constantinople, whereupon the Armenians and the Copts of Egypt and the Aramaic-speaking Syrians drifted off into Monophysitic aloofness. The extreme Nestorians spread their doctrine of Dyophysitism beyond the Euphrates, all the way to China.

Emperor Zeno issued his Henoticon, anathematizing Nestorius and Eutyches, endorsing Nicaea and Constantinople, but slighting Chalcedon. He outranked the patriarchs in his own mind and that of the Eastern masses and his

self-contradictory compromise lulled the controversy to sleep in the East. In Rome, however, Pope Simplicius felt he outranked everybody and excommunicated the entire East, emperor and patriarchs together.

The West was up to here with the East, which preferred the marvelous and esoteric to the matter-of-fact, mystical illumination to simple explanation, and ceaselessly spawned mystery religions -- Isis, Mithras, Mani's adaptation of Zoroaster's Mazdaism, and had even stimulated a competitive imitation by the Roman government, the cult of Sol Invictus, the unconquered sun. Additionally, Plotinus the Egyptian and Porphyry the Phoenician had transformed the crystalline elegance of Plato into Neoplatonism, a murky "illumination" which accepted pagan gods as glimpses of the One; this notion was not in itself totally intolerable, but it degenerated into a hobble-gobble well-suited to the Eastern mind, which habitually rejected any law of nature in favor of any available whim of supernature.

Years before I read about all this in Gibbon, my Illustrated Bible Story Book had convinced me that nothing that ever happened in the Holy Land had anything of significance to do with my Christianity.

GO DIRECTLY TO JAIL -- DO NOT PASS GO -- DO NOT COLLECT \$200

Thirteen centuries after Jesus Christ, the invention of parchment and quill pens and universities permitted His message to be rationally Latinized and organized, reconciling contradictions and bridging gaps. Seven centuries later, invention of the straight edge and squared paper and systems engineering permitted the Latin to be translated/a flow chart captioned "States of the soul in the theology of Thomas Aquinas."

On the far left of the chart, the "Start" arrow propels us rightward into the box of ORIGINAL SIN. From here the "Death" arrow shoots us (if we're newborn babies) up to the LIMBO box, whence the "Last Judgment" arrow conveys us to the top of the chart, the SALVATION box. (The box is also attained by three other arrows, as detailed below.) This route from LIMBO is a sure thing; the "judgment" being purely a formality, the kids just have to sit tight.

From ORIGINAL SIN the "Baptism" arrow leads horizontally to the GRACE box, distinctly the safest place to be short of SALVATION. Indeed, one of the box's three exit arrows, "Death," takes us up there like a shot, no waiting around for the "Last Judgment." A second exit arrow (for the third, see below), "Sloth, Etc.", transfers us rightward to the very crowded box of VENIAL SIN, a dicey spot yet distinctly intriguing to those with sporting blood.

The conservative bet, finding oneself in VENIAL SIN, is to take the "Absolution" arrow back to GRACE and remain there unto "Death." However, a curved arrow from "Sloth, Etc." returns to "Sloth, Etc.", suggesting the possibility of a long and full life of "Sloth, Etc." and no worse punishment at the end than the "Death" arrow upward to the PURGATORY box.

This humane box was devised centuries after editors had assembled the final form of the New Testament and therefore is not available to a fundamentalist, who has no second chance when run over by a truck, and no matter that he was hurrying to the Reverend Billy Bob's circus tent to answer the altar call. From PURGATORY we ascend to SALVATION via the arrow of "Expiation," which requires no subsequent review by the "Last Judgment." The process may take centuries or millenia, a snap of the fingers against eternity; the term may be reduced through the prayers, candles, and gifts to monasteries by loved ones, though no longer by the outright purchase of pardons. Lacking anybody's prayers whatsoever, when a fellow run over by a truck awakes in PURGATORY he can bless his lucky stars for making him a Catholic because this box's only other exit arrow, "Last Judgment," also goes strictly and automatically to SALVATION, so it's just a matter of waiting it out with the LIMBO babies.

A decision often is made to enjoy VENIAL SIN to the utmost and, when through age or a bad stomach the appetities[†] for "Sloth, Etc." diminish, dodge on back via "Absolution" to GRACE, thereby avoiding even the relatively minor penalty of PURGATORY. However, a person romping about in the sporting life all too easily leaves VENIAL SIN via the "Murder, Etc." arrow (an identical arrow exits from GRACE, but undoubtedly much less frequently) and arrives a-roaring at the far right of the chart, the box of MORTAL SIN.

All is not lost, even here. Another of those looping arrows keeps us plugging right along with our "Murder, Etc." and "Sloth, Etc." -- not indefinitely, of course. Eventually one of two arrows is going to have to be ridden on out of there. The "Absolution" arrow to GRACE is the alternative favored by kings and merchant princes and land-developers, who can't ply their trades profitably as Christians but wish to die as such.

From the MORTAL SIN box the "Death" arrow plunges irretrievably to the bottom of the chart, the DAMNATION box. An arrow does exit, but it's the "Last Judgment" and loops right back in, confirming what was long since settled. Indeed, this culminating ceremony in the history of humankind really is nothing more than a ratification of earlier judgments and has no apparent function except to let everybody dress up and sing hymns and to give the goodie-goodies at the top of the chart a chance to tell those at the bottom, "I told you so."

It was said of the jigsaw puzzle craze of the Depression's early years that it met a craving to put back together a shattered past. There was no misunderstanding the Monopoly mania later in the Depression -- Boardwalk and railroads aside, \$200 was more than twice what Dad then was earning in a month of forty-nine-hour weeks. I should think that Parker Brothers would find a steady demand for a board game based on the Aquinas flow chart.

THE NORTHWESTERN JESUS

Most Kelts of the British Isles sooner or later adopted the Christianity introduced via the Roman Empire. Though the organized Church subsequently was expelled from England by the invading Germans, they were converted before too long, either by Irish-Scot monks or the renewed Papal missions. Similarly, Swein's conquering Vikings were largely heathen but his successor, Canute, was devoutly Christian. It's a safe bet that my Ibero-Keltic, Anglo-Saxon, and Danish-Norwegian progenitors all entered the fold early or late in the first millenium A.D. or at the opening of the second.

It wasn't the same fold it used to be. During the journey West, then North, new meanings had been read into old words, many old words and meanings ignored and forgotten. Local deities too popular for the Church to risk condemning as demons or witches had been cleaned up and sainted and their sanitized revels installed on the calendar. The scholastic philosophy of the university doctors differed from the creed-stewing of the Eastern monks as fundamentally as Gothic cathedrals from Magian mosques. In moving West, Christianity had emerged from the ~~cave~~ cave into the sky. Then, in moving North, it had cooled in mood from the atmosphere of the hot Mediterranean.

The acclimatized Church was carried to America by English-speakers ^{on ships arriving} soon after the Mayflower. By then, though, it wasn't my Church. Some of my people may have spent as many as 1500 years in it, others as few as 500; excepting the occasional Black Irish who married into ~~the~~ ^{my} Orange family and in exchange for that honor gave up mass, the last of my relatives in all ^elikelihood converted out 400 years before I was born. Were I to return to Catholicism, it would be as a stranger.

The English-Catholic (Anglican) Church may have retained some of my people as long as 300 years. Chances are that most slid quickly out the Low Church door into the chapels and that for the bulk of the 400 years since quitting the Pope have been this or that species of Nonconformist.

What Methodism is, or was, I never learned. It seems to have sprung from that Great Awakening in the eighteenth century when excitable and ignorant people on both sides of the Atlantic cast out of their minds what little knowledge of the past they retained after two centuries of excitability and ~~repeated~~ ^{adopted} as their model of intellectuality the great minds of the Near East.

The Sunday School teachers would have held my interest longer had they dwelt on the radiance with which the Keltic Church illuminated a corner of the Dark Ages, and on the dramatic conversion of the Western barbarians and the abundant ~~European~~ martyrdoms of ~~the~~ Northern saints. All this, however, had been expelled from memory for being too Catholic.

The true history of the Holy Land was suppressed for being too Jewish. We were not instructed that the Jews were perhaps the first to record a perception of the coherence of Nature. Neither were we told that until about 200 A.D. the Judaists and the Nazarenes were ~~rather described as~~ two sects rather than two religions. (Knowing this would have helped reconcile our reading of the Old Testament ^{with our} ~~which~~ practicing in ~~our~~ daily and national Christian lives a more or less virulent anti-Semitism; by being informed of our spiritual roots ^{of pre-200} ~~in the good Jews/we~~ could have understood our hatred of the post-200/Jews; ^{bad} it was of the same piece as our distinction between the Catholics of pre-Henry VIII and post-Henry VIII.)

There was a viable Northwestern Jesus. The Methodists weren't satisfied. A Christianity that was acceptable to educated, intelligent people was too fancy for them. They rejected the traditions accreted over the centuries in their home latitudes and longitudes in favor of the treacly tableaux and magic tricks of the Magians. Worse. They rejected (that is, never bothered to investigate) the complex (albeit loony) mysticism of the monks in favor of straight-out feeble-mindedness. I never learned what Methodism is, or was, because ^{so far as I could tell} there was nothing to learn.

The old Northwestern Christianity might have afforded me a spiritual home, providing the symbol of Jesus for emotional support and the mind of William of Ockham for intellectual sustenance. However, that was not the faith my family brought with it to the New World. Indeed, by the time I began asking embarrassing questions at family gatherings, nobody knew what their faith was. The Eastern mumbo jumbo I was fed in Sunday School hadn't translated to Rome, much less Canterbury, and hadn't a chance with me on Puget Sound, on the northwest coast of a whole other continent.

The most persuasive argument for adhering to the Christianity of my family's old home is the Bible. It truly is a good book, though nowhere near as good as is assumed by those who've never read it and those who've never read anything else. The ~~begettings~~ begettings are so mechanical they are too easily parodied, as Joseph Smith demonstrated. Such ^{family} chronicles would be worth my devout attention only had the scene been Northumbria and Ionia and Ireland and Denmark, the northern lands where the glaciers had only just melted, as they haven't yet in the wilderness where I go to be alone.

People who grow up on moraines never can be comfortable in desert oases, among natives who reek of frankincense and myrrh and pour oil in their hair and wash each other's feet. John the Baptist went striding off into the hot sun. When it got down to cases, I couldn't go with him ^{after all.} My striding off had to be in snow, rain, or dense fog.

Christianity ought to release most of the Bible to the people who lived it. Some of the poetry should be retained, in the translation that took good poetry and made it great. A pulpit graced by a slender volume of excerpts from the King James Version and a thicker volume from Shakespeare and company could be a very solid anchor. To be sure, the church would want some other name than "Christian."

THE SAINTS COME MARCHING IN

The only thing that separates us from the animals
is mindless superstition and pointless ritual.

--old saying in Ladka's country

The World Christian Encyclopedia (1982) joyously announces that "The collapse of religion that was foreseen 20 years ago is just not taking place." Rather than humankind steadily "moving toward secularism and non-religion, there is a big swing away from all forms of anti-religion or non-religious ideology. The figures demonstrate it."

The figures are those of the Reverend David B. Barrett, identified by ~~the~~ ^{he wrote} encyclopedia as "the world's leading authority on religious statistics." He determined that in 1982 the world's people were 79 percent religious, sharply up from 72 percent in 1970; outright disbelievers had declined from 13 to 4.4 percent.

Among the world's 4.8 billion people, the Reverend found 1.6 billion Christians, 837 million Moslems, 661 million Hindus, 300 million Buddhists, 457 million of other religions, 825 million non-religious, and 213 million atheists. A reviewer suggested that a scholar of the last persuasion might have arrived at different totals. That misses the point: so monumental a task could not have been completed without assistance ~~that could be~~ denied an atheist -- the Southern Baptists put the Reverend on their payroll for three years to tabulate the Good News.

Rev. Barrett doesn't claim to have interviewed the ^{entire} 4.8 billion in person. He missed the Koreshans of South Florida who believe the Earth is a hollow sphere with the sun in the center; their Messiah is (or was) Dr. Cyrus Reed Teed, a New York physician. He fails to include the Reverend Al's

congregation -- a difficult one to pin down, consisting as it does of folks who write "America's Minister by Mail" to buy Prayer Bracelets, wallets made in Hong Kong and ^e personally blessed by Al, and Anointing Oil imported from the Holy Land, for sneaking up behind people at the supper table.

Would New Age be counted by him as Christian or "other"? It considers Jesus its founder because he "ran around walking on water, turning water into wine, generally acting funny," as ~~one New Ager says she tries to do herself~~ Shirley MacLaine and many other movie stars are communicants. They check in to the John Bastyr College of Naturopathic Medicine for holistic treatment of body and soul. For spiritual nourishment they seek out J.Z. Knight, known in ^{by that name} his ^{her} home town of Yelm, Washington, ~~by that name~~ ^{she the general} though ~~he~~ really is Ramtha, a 35,000-year-old enlightened "entity."

Many New Agers enroll in A Course in Miracles, based on a textbook, workbook, and teacher's manual dictated by Jesus Christ to Helen Schucman, a Jewish atheist who was a psychologist at Columbia University. Taking down the 500,000 words of [^] dictation occupied her seven years, from 1965 to 1972. Graduates of the course say it has made them better Christians, less angry and more loving. However, ^{California} Spiritual Counterfeits, a/cult-watching organization, says "The message does not jibe with the message in the Bible." The Colossian Fellowship of Seattle, an evangelical ministry, believes the course comes from spirits all right, ~~but~~ ~~not good ones~~. A spokesman says, "We believe it is a demon masquerading." The Reverend Gordon Schnee of Bellevue's First Methodist Church retorts, "There is nothing in the course that's not found in the Bible, but it cuts through a lot of the goop."

Distinctly among the "other religions" is the Church of Scientology, the most vigorous religion that I have personally observed from its inception. In the 1950s L. Ron Hubbard decimated the ranks of psychology majors at the University of Washington (and doubtless throughout American academia) when, in the pages of Astounding Science Fiction, he set forth a replacement for psychology -- dianetics. The University District was in a lather as ~~former~~ ^{"auditors"} ~~psychologists~~ ^{as auditors} trained by Hubbard went ~~working~~ about with E meters, coaxing engrams out of patients that they might ultimately attain the condition, pioneered by Hubbard (who had audited himself) of being a "clear."

Having succeeded in replacing the unscientific babblings of ~~the~~ Freud ~~with~~ with a simple means of straightening out peoples' heads, Hubbard went to work on their souls. The cosmology of the church he devised features the evil Xemu, Thetans, atom bombs, and brainwashing. It makes very good sense to a sci-fi fan, certainly better than two-thousand-year-old Magian moonshine. His departure -- referred to in the press as his "death" -- was declared by the general counsel of the church to be for purposes of "conducting out-of-body research," which is no more open to doubt than events in the New Testament.

SHAKE RATTLE AND ROLL WITH THE FLOW

Some or all my people on both sides of the Atlantic doubtless were swept up by ~~the Great Awakening~~ of the Great Awakening of the eighteenth century. Chances are they then settled into the "mainstream" as Methodists or whatever and missed out on the nineteenth century enthusiasms. (I can't be sure of that -- among Brigham Young's stalwarts was a Manning. The name was common enough in the Northwest Territories, where my Orange ancestors traipsed around in the French_ and-Indian Era before heading -- some of them -- north to New Brunswick. A Manning rode with Jesse James.)

It may be questioned whether the Awakening ever ended, or ever had a beginning other than the expulsion from the Garden. Certainly, of the making of many churches in the twentieth century there is no end. The frontier of Protestantism is a scene of as much ferment as in the Reformation or the heyday of the Magian Jesus.

As near as I can figure from what I read in the papers, a fundamentalist believes that "every word in the Bible is literally true" (no goop); that Hell and the Devil solidly exist; that Communism, evolution, pornography, homosexuality, and abortion are the Devil's work; and that God endorses the system of free enterprise capitalism which exploits the low-income, ill-educated folks who comprise the preponderance of fundamentalists. (Fundamentalists hold fast to the Good Book but change their politics. In the age when they captured the Democratic Party and ran William Jennings Bryan for President of the United States they were radical populists who hated railroads, bankers, and Wall Street "gold bugs" as bitterly as they did Jews, Catholics, and niggers. Similarly,

though they now believe it is America's mission to smite ^{the} nations of the world ~~under~~ under Satan's rule, until World War II they were isolationists who believed the rest of the world ^{deserved} ~~that~~ Satan, ~~coming to them~~)

A fundamentalist may or may not be an evangelical, and an evangelical may not be (but in most cases is) a fundamentalist. The term seems to be defined by being "born again," a decision for Christ made by a person old enough to know what's happening, in contrast to the infant at the baptismal font. (The rebirth apparently can come through prayer or a good preaching, but some groups seem to feel the job isn't done until a total-immersion baptism takes place; ~~when~~ when I was a kid such events were on the movie newsreels as regularly as horse races.) Many evangelicals are not racists, in fact are blacks, Jimmy Carter Democrats, or liberal populists. Many belong to mainstream denominations in which individual congregations may or may not be rigorously fundamentalist.

Other evangelicals are fire-breathing, fire-bombing (family-planning clinics) ripsnorters who want to purify America and nuke Moscow and Cuba. Reverend Doctor Pat Robertson, Southern Baptist preacher and founder of the Christian Broadcasting Network based in Virginia, speaks of the "60-70 million born-again evangelicals... most of them broadly educated, informed, and economically productive people who will fight for freedom." He is convinced they are so broadly educated and informed they eventually will vote for a person like him for President of the United States.

A charismatic may or may not be a fundamentalist and may or may not be an evangelical but in most cases is both. The movement derives from the belief that what happened in the Holy Land way back when can happen just as readily here and

now. A person who "baptizes his spirit," an experience beyond simple conversion (is it like being "born again"? Is there immersion in water, partial or total?), can perform acts of healing, can prophesy, and can speak in tongues.

Students of the religious scene say the charismatic typically keeps his religion apart from his politics, if any. However, Reverend Doctor Robertson denounces Reds/in one breath and in the next commands the eczema and hemorrhoids to be gone from his congregation. In private, so he says, he frequently prays "in the spirit" -- in tongues, that is.

Charisma^{ci}tism can be traced back ^{as far as} ~~to~~ ^{possibly} the caves, to the trees full of monkeys. The contemporary manifestation is rooted in the fringes of society -- the poor, the black, the rural -- at the turn of the century. Neglected by the fastidious mainstream churches, these people invented their own. In some they handled snakes (and still do -- the leading cause of death from rattlesnake bite in America is religious services). In some they sang and shook themselves into rapture, then shook off their clothes and ran out in the bushes to shake themselves and willing partners into ecstasy.

The less violent shakers and screamers called themselves Pentecostals, for the Pentecost, the day when, according to the Book of Acts, the Holy Spirit came upon the Church. There are not many fewer Pentecostal churches than there are Pentecostals, and a new one is founded every time an ambitious youngster pops out of a seminary and rents himself an abandoned supermarket. The first thing he does, of course, is set up a Building Fund, and thus the longer-established congregations in the suburbs have very nice buildings designed by real architects. Many of the communicants used to worship in barns and though ^{they} now [^] go to work dressed in suits and ties remain country cousins; a good career

move, upon attaining a certain level in a corporate hierarchy, is to switch to a mainstream church.

A person by no means must thereby quit being charismatic. As the twentieth century muddled to midpoint, many a mainstremer felt a deep hunger and observed that the neighbors next door, who/came from the ~~country~~ ^{originally} but now had three cars in the carport like everybody else on the block, returned from church on Sunday looking ineffably smug. So it was that during a ~~rain~~ ^{staid} Lutheran service a well-dressed, well-educated woman (American Association of University Women, League of Women Voters, American Civil Liberties Union) would leap up screeching and fall down writhing and in an instant the church floor would be a mass of moaning, twitching Lutherans. In some mainstream denominations ten percent of the pastors and lay people are charismatics. The last decade or so they haven't spoken in tongues as much as formerly. Skeptics with portable tape recorders have pretty well ~~ruined~~ ^{spoiled that.} They still moan and writhe.

Perhaps because the mainstream is calming down (which is what makes it the mainstream) the Pentecostal churches are growing much the faster, and that's why Reverend Doctor Robertson feels the White House is ~~waiting~~ ^{ready} for one of his kind. Political sages doubt it. They predict that Pentecostal charismatics soon will lose whatever small interest they now may have in politics. Most of Robertson's flock are less interested in killing Russians than in ridding themselves of hemorrhoids. Students of religious frontiering suggest the next big enthusiasm to sweep the nation will be shaking off the clothes and running out in the bushes. ~~In the Seattle area the police already have made a number of arrests.~~

TWO-DIMENSIONAL DEVILS

For twenty years Reverend Doctor Billy Graham was resident evangelist to the White House. I never liked him -- too squeaky-clean, too mechanical, too bland, no fun. He came to look mighty good, though, when his place was taken by the Reverend Jerry Falwell, who preached that Christ was calling upon America to stockpile more missiles and who asked Christian forgiveness for the folks who dynamited planned parenthood clinics. The Vice President of the United States praised ~~him~~^{Falwell} for "a great revival of an old American tradition," a description that would apply as well to ~~the born-again~~ Know Nothings, ~~and Ku Klux Klansmen~~. In 1980 he was put in perspective by Arbitron, the national television rating service, which counted the combined audiences of the top ten electronic evangelists at 13.8 million -- "less than the weekly audience claimed by Jerry Falwell."

Leading the Arbitron pack with 2.3 million viewers was Oral Roberts. He and roller derby were my favorites in the early days of television. I loved to watch the vicious blockers of the men's team throw opponents over the rail and jump up and down on their faces, the tough little jammers of the women's team bust through the blockers and pull their hair out by the roots. Oral was equally thrilling when he dug his fingers in a sick person's shoulders, rolled his enormous eyes up to Heaven, and in a voice like a thunderbolt cried "BE HEALED!" Right there before my eyes in black and white the folks jumped ^{from} ~~out of~~ wheelchairs, flung away crutches, weeping, "I can see! I can hear! I can play the piano!"

Oral gave up healing on TV when he built his university and ^{recruited} a basketball team often ranked in the Top Twenty. Still, to lead the way in uniting the healing powers of prayer and medical science he set out to build ~~his medical school~~ a first-class teaching hospital. The Tulsa community objected. In the ^{era} ~~time~~ of ~~his~~ unlimited oil wealth it had erected enough hospitals ^{to provide} ~~for~~ every sick person ~~in the state~~ ^{in the state} three beds. One more major facility and the healing arts of Oklahoma would face bankruptcy. In this dark hour of his life, Satan clawing at him, Oral went walking and praying on his beautiful campus and saw there, standing taller than the Prayer Tower ~~that stood tall~~ ^{which is} visible from four counties, the Lord Jesus Christ, and His word was, "Go to it, Oral!" Oral's competitors who never had seen Jesus at all claimed He wasn't that tall. The national press published ^{Satan's} every snide remark ~~that Satan said~~ Oral's television audience plummeted ^{to half} ~~the~~ 4.35 million of 1977. His son, who had been assuming a ^{steadily} larger role on the program, ~~as a substitute~~, announced one thrilling Sunday that he had gotten the call from Jesus, even as Dad had years before, and the two of them in partnership would now resume on-camera healing.

Arbitron's #2 in 1980 was Robert Schuller. At his high-church pulpit in his high-church vestments, speaking in an ^{refreshingly} emphatically non-Southern accent, he comes across as neither charismatic, evangelical, nor fundamentalist, nor anything else except a resounding moralist in the school of the pre-television superstar, Dr. Norman Vincent Peale. He pioneered an ingenious route to the top. Called ^{in succession} ~~after~~ ~~to~~ ordainment to a series of pulpits that might have gotten him to Red Bluff by the age of 50, he rented the unused Sunday mornings of a

drive-in theater in ^{Los Angeles} ~~a California suburb~~ and invited families to "worship in the privacy of your automobile." The flood of love offerings enabled him to build the Crystal Cathedral, fit for an Anglican bishop and lovingly caressed ^{each Sunday} by the camera, which rarely flits over the adjoining drive-in church.

The #3 was Jimmy Swaggart^s of Baton Rouge, as fascinating ^{a bayou} as/cottonmouth, as country as Grand Ole Opry, fundamentalist, evangelistic, but apparently not charismatic, though he frequently makes ~~him~~ ^{fond} noises about "our Pentecostal brothers and sisters." He puts on a rattling show with ~~similarities~~ similarities to that of his cousin, Jerry Lee Lewis, the ~~quintessential~~ country-rock outlaw. Jimmy marches up and down the stage sucking his electronic phallus, jiggling and high-kicking, mopping ~~honest~~ sweat from his brow, weeping for the pain of Jesus and mocking poor ol' stupid Satan. He rants against "Commonists" and "sekalur hoomanists" but is not particularly dangerous. His ~~people~~ ^{people} have learned to dress up since Billy Sunday had them ~~rolling~~ ^{flopping} in the aisles in bib overalls and flour-sack shifts but they still move their lips and lick the pencil lead when addressing the envelopes containing their love offerings. The strongest public statement ^{the typical} by ^A Swaggarterian is answering the altar call to be born again (and again, and again).

Holding down the #4 spot, despite having lost 466,000 viewers in a year, was Rex Humbard, whose accent is ^{pure} ~~a~~ Heartland. ~~So~~ So dull is he in his corn-fed suit, with his enormous corn-fed family, he makes Billy Graham look like a vaudeville act. Nevertheless, in Middle America nobody runs for public office without a laying-on of those corn-fed hands on the television.

To be #5 behind the likes of Humbard cannot but humble Jerry Falwell, whose Liberty College on Liberty Mountain, West Virginia, never has witnessed a Jesus Christ as tall as a Prayer Tower. The Vice President of the United States, and the booking agent at the White House, must have noted that Arbitron had Falwell ^{just} narrowly edging Day of Discovery (which is how some people lull themselves back to ^{post-sex} sleep Sunday morning), the Gospel Singing Jubilee, Insight, ^{and} Jim Bakker's PTL Club. All these, and Falwell, and Humbard, are keeping a nervous eye on #10, Kenneth Copeland, a former student of Oral Roberts and "the hottest new syndicated television evangelist." He truly is a jimdandy, a shorty who disdains using a stage or pulpit to make him look tall. He gets right down on the floor of the gymnasium with the folks in the folding chairs, struts up and down sticking his nose in their faces and demanding to know where they stand with Jesus. His right eye opens wider than his left and exposes a gleaming expanse of white eyeball. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

~~There's no Christian business like Christian show business.~~

A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM

Number Two Daughter's favorite book in her years as an illiterate toddler was a collection of Charles Addams cartoons. By the hour she studied the Gothic-novel mansion inhabited by the master, evil in an Asian-Latin way, *and by* Boris Karloff as the butler, a bat of a daughter and a pig of a son, miscellaneous crazed faces peering from upstairs windows -- and the mistress, a witch with long black hair and a slinky black gown.

At an age when playmates were eating Silly Putty, she fashioned a head. It rests on my desk now. I often stare at it -- but not too long.

Displayed in our living room are chunks of the hard, gray Cougar Mountain mudstone upon which the house is built. She picked them up in the wake of a bulldozer, went at them with screwdriver, Boy Scout knife, fingernail file, ~~and~~ toothbrush, and no teacher whatsoever. Guests comment on the life-size heads she sculpted, wax enthusiastic over how Grecian they are, and then fall silent. Olympus never knew such gods and goddesses as these, except ~~perhaps~~ on dark and stormy nights.

Obeying Dad's advice never to talk religion with people I like, I've never asked Rebecca when she became a witch. Possibly she recognized herself as such the summer she graduated from high school, rode Canadian railways to Nova Scotia to visit the birthplace of Dad's mother, and then bicycled south to Massachusetts to visit that grand person in the ninth of what were to be exactly ten decades of life. On a dark and stormy night she got off her bike and knocked on the door of the house in Danvers, originally known as Salem Village, some of whose inhabitants were burnt at the stake by residents of nearby Salem Town.

Betty and I did nothing to teach her witching. She and Number One daughter seemed to us safe from organized religion, spending as they did most Sundays in the mountains. Gradually we learned -- remembered -- how much kids learn from elsewhere than their folks. Driving along streets of Seattle in the family microbus, we'd pass people with non-European skin colors, ^{in that period} ~~then~~ never seen east of Lake Washington, and Betty and I would have to explain "race." But when we passed nuns in habit and I expected exclamations, there was no response. Becky had figured them out and explained them to her older sister as "lady Gods".

At the age when neighborhood kids were pridefully reciting what their Daddys did for a living, how big was their TV screen, what country their grandparents came from, ^{and} the make of the family car, our daughters came home one day mortified and desolated. Their playmates went to church on Sunday. Their bosom buddies had taunted them with being atheists damned to Hell. Betty promptly enrolled us in the Unitarians, whose philosophical foundations are broad enough to support any ^{moderately} rational belief. That got the blue-eyed Lutherans off the backs of our daughters, who after a few times at Sunday School were satisfied to go to the mountains.

Rebecca never has belonged to a coven. Her solitary worship is entirely in art. On a beach of Bainbridge Island, where the two of us had gone to visit the site of my childhood sandbox, she picked up a miscellany of wave-washed artifacts. On a shard of bathroom porcelain she painted ⁺ a woman's face and glued on a headdress of ^{bits of} colored glass. The woman might be a temple dancer. The eyes and lips suggest a taste for blood. Shiva?

The faces she doodles on a telephone pad and in margins of letters have an Egyptian look, or Minoan, or Sumerian, or of the dark race which inhabited

Western Europe before the onslaught of the ruddy Kelts. Some of these women, met in real life, might impel a person to fall at their feet and beg for a blessing; others, to run like hell.

Her lithographs would not be permitted on the office walls of a physician dealing with nervous disorders. In a landscape where the glacier has barely melted and no thing yet grows, ~~darkly~~ veiled women dance under a crescent moon partnered by lions who are more than feline and horned creatures only ~~partly~~ ^{superficially} human.

A woman with a silver skin and windblown hair and mad eyes, and a pre-Hellenic goddess with ~~enormous eyes and~~ hair in golden ringlets, look out from a nightmare of clouds that doesn't quite conceal ~~the horror of the blackness~~ outer space. A fish swims through the clouds. Eyes stare from the blackness.

Her early photography was of the ash-can school. For a while she worked in collage. Lately she has been picking through the rags bin at the Goodwill, taking selected garments to a secluded corner of a city park and donning them, setting the camera on automatic, and by dawn's early light dancing around the greensward. Now and then, by lucky chance, the camera captures the expression on the face of a jogger huffing around a corner.

THE GODDESS

In the nineteenth century, after the subversion of Genesis by geology, fairies began dancing in gardens all over England. Better say, they began to be noticed, since they'd been going at it ever since the Kelts arrived, though emerging from their underground retreats only in the right light and to the needful eye. They were seen in still greater numbers during World War I amid the universal grief at the horror in the trenches. One group was photographed by two young girls at Cottingley Dell, near Bingley in Yorkshire. The photographs were examined by *Sir Arthur* Conan Doyle, who pronounced them genuine. The secretary of the Theosophical Society, commenting on the photographs, explained that fairies work inside the stems of flowers, tint the petals and give a warm green color to the leaves; they are visible, he said, only when resting from their labors.

In the mid-twentieth century, after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the sky began to be crowded by unidentified objects -- rather, the objects began to be looked at. They'd always been there. The Bible was full of them.

As the twentieth century ends amid a widespread conviction that mankind will, or should, end with it, thousands of young American women who work by day at aerospace companies, computer factories, and banks, an owl in the buttonhole the one thing visibly in common among them, are assembling during the full of the moon, taking off their clothes, jumping in swimming pools and forming circles, and chanting, "The Goddess is alive, magic is afoot!"

Julian the Apostate is quoted as saying on his deathbed in 363, "Thou has conquered, O pale Galilean!" Broadly speaking, the emperor was correct;

the total claimed memberships of Christian sects in the United States presently exceed 500,000,000, which means every man, woman, and child belongs on the average to 2.3 Christian churches. About 500,000 are registered evangelical Christians whose love offerings buy, in a typical market, eight to twelve hours of Sunday television time.

The memberships of Judaic, Magian, Asian, Native American, and other religions are much smaller and their television visibility minimal. The neo-pagans enroll perhaps 50,000 -- a tenth the number of evangelicals -- and can't afford a minute of television time. However, they own outright the days of the week and it's a mystery that Jerry Falwell and Jimmy Swaggart ^{and Congress} aren't doing something about ~~it~~ ^{that}. After Sun Day (which is not God's) and Moon Day (so much the less) come Tui's Day (for war), Woden's Day (for the Teutonic/chieftain), Thor's Day (thunder), Frigga's Day (for love, warmth, passion, or just plain frigging), and Saturn's Day (for the Saturnalia of college football games and beer joints on the highway out of town).

As these paganisms on the calendar of a Christian nation prove, the pale Galilean didn't have it so easy as Julian imagined -- at least, not in the North. It was one thing for a barbarian chieftain, seeking political advantage in quarrels with neighboring chieftains, to cut a deal with a missionary bishop, and quite another to ~~make~~ ^{force} his Kelts or Germans or Norse ~~to~~ memorize the Latin catechism. A mass conversion a mile wide may be an inch deep. Later, when the state religion became the instrument of the lord of the manor, who in Keltic (of England) areas/normally was German, and in German, Norman French, and his priest had a greasy look and a Southern accent, it's more than likely that many countryfolk

would bow heads while the priest intoned "mumbo jumbo abba dabba doo," then sneak off to a high hill and rip off clothes and chant by moonlight, "The Goddess is alive, magic is afoot!"

Jesus Christ might be all well and good for the lords and ladies, the monks and friars, and the generals whose troops trampled crops, stole pigs, and raped women in the Name of the Lord. Down on the farm, though, it was observed that as gods go He was just a kid and had a lot to learn about the job. Further, He was new to this country. Maybe He knew figs, whatever those might be. What about barley and leeks? For thousands of years the seeds had germinated and the crops ripened, calves and babies been conceived and born, under the oversight of the Old. Farmers knew how ~~to show proper respect~~ to show proper respect by closely watching motions of the Sun and Moon.

The pagan year had four great days of Sun-Earth relationships and, between them, four "cross-quarter" days, these marking the times when the effects of *the great* celestial events (equinoxes and solstices) on Earthly seasons became distinctly apparent.

a cross-quarter,

The year opened on [^]Samhain, November 1, almost halfway between equinox and solstice, amidst the transition from autumn to winter. Yule, December 21 or 22, was the winter solstice, shortest day of the year. Brigid, February 2, was another cross-quarter halfway point. The worst of winter usually was over, an early spring was possible soon -- though it would be a false spring if the groundhog saw its shadow. Eostar, March 21 or 22, marked the spring equinox, when the day was equal in length to the night and everything would be getting better and better for months and months. The cross-quarter Beltana, May 1,

came in that delicious spell when spring was so exuberant it often was more summer than summer. Litha, June 21 or 22, celebrated the summer solstice, longest day of the year, the night so brief it was a waste to go to bed, better to run up on top of a hill and light a bonfire and dance dance dance. The cross-quarter Lughnasadh, August 1, was in another transition, the sun still hot but most flowers already going to seed and the mushrooms not many weeks from their faery fruiting. Mabon, September 21 or 22, was the autumn equinox, the night now equal to the day, the crops ready for harvest, and ~~then~~ ^{then} everything downhill the next three months or more.

The Church smoothly coopted pagan days for its own calendar and scrubbed up and canonized the people's favorite nature spirits. Yule became Christmas; Eostar, Easter; Brigid's Feast of Lights, featuring torches welcoming the return of the Goddess from the underworld, became Candlemass, starring St. Bridget. As for most ^{of the old} other deities, a propaganda machine based on the only international bureaucracy and a near monopoly of literacy easily tarred the Opposition as a conspiracy of black witches. The Earth Mother was equated with Eve; Her Consort, the Horned God, with the Devil.

Black magic exists, beyond question. However, cults of evil -- the Satanists and their sort -- are less religious than perversely sexual. Most witchery the Christians call black is merely rebellious. A peasant dancing in the moonlight bites his thumb at the Italianate nobs in their castles and monasteries. A Salem Villager delights in blinking ~~the~~ eyes and crooking ~~the~~ fingers in ways that scare the hell out of those psalm-singing sons of bitches in Salem Town. A bank teller frolicking nude in a swimming pool gives that

to the damn computer screen.

Practitioners insist it is not possible to worship the Goddess and the Horned God and not be purely white. Men and women who in past ages confessed (many without torture, and proudly) to flying through the air on broomsticks with horned companions veritably did so, on the wings of mushrooms from the Goddess. Many went to their martyrdoms rejoicing as gladly as any Catholic saint.

Wicca, one of the neo-pagan religions common in America, has covens of up to thirteen witches, male and female. The group gathers in the full of the moon, a priestess representing the Goddess and a priest the Horned God. The priest draws a nine-foot circle with a knife. The priestess sweeps the circle clean of evil with her broom and waves a censer of rose petals and cedar. The priest lights four candles on an altar. Celebrants are anointed with water and salt. A brass bell invokes the Mighty Ones -- air, fire, water, and earth. Chanting and dancing ensue.

A person shopping around for a legitimate connection to his past may doubt that this and other reconstructions -- typically, ~~consisting of~~ mishmashes of Eastern mystery religions, Unitarianism, scraps of Catholicism and Judaism, and Native American beliefs -- are ^{accurately} derived from his ancestors in Salem Village, medieval England, or the Old Stone Age.

The Goddess is another matter. I entered Her service when I was twelve years old, ascending fields of flowers to Marmot Pass, fairies dancing around me by the hundreds.

PEOPLES OF THE MORAINES

On our hike south from Kool-Aid Lake to the Spider-Formidable Col, Ted paused to lever two large stones upright and -- with my aid -- lay a third across the top. He said his Iceland ancestors did this all the time. So did mine, I later learned. The "dolmen" is found everywhere in domains of the Norse and German and Kelt, and Iberian, the peoples who lived with the Pleistocene glaciers of northwestern Europe. A number are scattered now across the high Cascades. It comes natural, roaming a rock-bare basin at the snout of a rockmilk-gushing glacier, scrambling over raw moraines, to do as the Earth spirits have so abundantly done -- pile up rocks, perhaps murmuring, "By your leave, Sirs and Madams, anything to please."

Missionaries from the hot south must have despaired at how cheerfully the pagans of the Midnight Sun listened to descriptions of Hellfire. Presumably a smart bishop spotted the problem and sent out a memo to adopt the Northern notion of punishment after death -- being eternally frozen in an icicle. In highlands of the Cascades and Olympics, with last winter's snows lingering in corners, ~~with~~ next winter's snows in the sky just beyond the horizon, a hiker can't get interested in ~~magic rituals performed~~ ^{a cosmology invented} amid palm trees and desert sands. The gods around him in the lifeless ice and sterile mineral are those who came down from the frozen North to Germany and England.

However, when the hiker descends to the flowery lap of the Earth Mother he renounces the Viking religion, returns to the ^{preglacial} ~~old~~ Norse belief, the old European belief -- in the Goddess. The Viking faith had no ancient roots,

new as a moraine, ruthless as an iceberg.
 was cobbled together not much, if any before Christianity. It was an apologia
 frostbitten
 for criminals, all murder and pillage and wanton destruction, only the one day
 of the week for frigging -- and that, typically, gang-raping and child-molesting.
 No Augustine and Aquinas stepped forth to tidy up the inanities for swallowing
 by educated people. Despite the names of the days of the week, for a thousand
 years nobody has taken the Northern pantheon seriously except Wagner and
 Hitler.

Amid the living glaciers, I join Ted in erecting dolmen, out of respect
 for where I am. In the city I do not ~~join him in~~ attending the Seattle Opera's
 performances of the Ring of the Nibelungen. Neither do I trick myself out in
 the costume of peasant ancestors and go jigging about the room. Ted does that,
 but after all, he was born ^{among} dolmen, on the far side of the Atlantic. Not a
 single one of my progenitors arrived on this side later than the Famine. When
 the accordion starts whining I haven't a thing to wear, and I never learned to
 jig.

has done
 No more than Christ [^] has Woden, nor even the Horned God, reached across
 those ocean waters to touch my spirit. Were I to return to my "homeland," it
 would be to brood in Hardy twilights, walk with Wordsworth "near the tumultuous
 brook of Green-head Gyll," tour Bath with Jane Austen, trace the high road of
 Tom Jones, punt the Avon through Stratford. Were I to visit Rome, it would be to
 honor
~~the~~ the Popes who excommunicated the Magian East and sent missionaries
 and invented the Holy Roman Empire.
 to the Angles and Saxons [^] Were I to go on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, it would

be to marvel how very brief a time ago it was that peoples of the desert invented irrigation and cost-accounting, professional priests and soldiers.

It would be as silly of me to don white robes at sunrise and try to fight through the screen of police protecting Stonehenge from tourists as to put on kilts and hug a bagpipe or stick a clay pipe in me mouth and sing "Danny Boy."

Huckleberry is my Stonehenge. Marmot Pass is my Sistine Chapel. The Pyramids were impressive in their time and place; my home glaciers have outheaped them by the thousandsfold.

OLD COYOTE

In twilight they began arriving, from all points of the compass, by barely passable tracks over the rimrock ridges and along the gulches, driving their decrepit cars singly and slow not to stir dust that might be spotted at a distance. They had left their homes one family at a time, from morning to afternoon, and driven to all points of the compass before turning toward the site. For days the Bible-thumpers had been bullying children and the elderly, trying to scare the secret out of them, with no success. Not until in ~~the~~ cars ready to go were celebrants told where to go. The sheriff's deputies watched the villages emptying but couldn't follow all the flivvers; those they did ^{follow} circled aimlessly or [^] broke down.

The celebrants selected comfortable places to sit in the bunchgrass and sagebrush, under the pines, on slopes of the natural amphitheater hidden in the hills. The fire was built high, logs stacked to keep it well-fed far into the night. ^{The that} Baskets were passed from hand to hand around the circle contain^{ed}g the cactus buttons that had been carried from reservation to reservation from the Southwest to bypass postmasters who at the behest of the thumpers routinely invaded private mail. The chewing commenced, swelling the buttons to cheek-bulging pulps that were difficult to swallow and sat heavy in the belly. Periodically it was necessary to go to the edge of the firelight and throw up. Another button then would be started. The trick was to retain the pulp as long as possible, to extract the vital juices.

When the night was at its darkest and bloodstreams were full of juices, the unburnt logs were pulled to the side and the heap of coals raked flat. The Artist, who on this occasion chanced to be among the most renowned in the West, constantly ^{in transit} ~~on the move~~ from reservation to reservation, began.

~~The~~ Fountains of ~~George Toubakian~~ are admired ~~from his home in Seattle to~~
~~that of his forefathers in Japan~~ for their sculpturing of water. The medium of
 this Artist was fire. His canvas was the night. His palette was glowing embers.
 His brush was a long pole. He began at a slow tempo, pushing and pulling to
 compose arrangements of straight lines and arcs, the pace so deliberate the eye
 could follow the evolution of an image, which when complete would be let ^{alone} long
 enough to burn deep into minds of viewers. As the night passed he worked faster,
 at last so swiftly that image piled atop image in kaleidoscopic succession, leaving
 viewers breathless and dazed.

For some celebrants the fire paintings were portraits of ancestors, brought
 back to life; for others, of personal Attendants; for still others, of the Great
 One. Everyone heard the Good News: soon the White Man would abandon his farms
 and towns and as abruptly and inexplicably as he had come West, would return
 East, to board ships and sail back where he came from, and once again the buffalo
 would darken the plain and everything would be as it had been, before.

At dawn, the fire sunk to ashes and the juices dissipated, ~~out the~~
 three bowls were handed around the amphitheater circle. One held meat; in
 the old days it would have been venison or pemmican; this morning it was slices
 of Spam. A second held fruit; formerly it would have been fresh-picked or
 sun-dried serviceberries or huckleberries or wild plums; today there were
 canned cherries. The third contained, now as then, plain, pure water.

The flivvers departed separately, returned home by roundabout routes,
 arriving in villages under the frustrated glower of deputy sheriffs and Bible-
 thumpers.

This was the ceremony described to me by a college professor who after a number of years had gained the trust of these people of the High Plains. Its origin was in the late nineteenth century, when good news was badly wanted in the West. Other ~~the various~~ revival cults were ^{that of} the Shakers, who when they shook themselves into a receptive condition were informed by none other than Jesus ~~Christ~~ that the White Man soon would go away; and the Ghost Dance, which made the U.S. Army fearful that "the greatest light cavalry in the history of war" might have developed a taste for Custers.

My anthropology professor at the University of Washington was an expert storyteller. He recited myths of Western Washington peoples, ^{imitating} the rhythms and intonations ^{of} ~~heard learned listening to~~ elders who ~~clearly~~ remembered ^{their} grandparents ^{telling how they watched} ~~who clearly remembered watching~~ the first tall ships sail into their home bays.

The myths were entertaining enough, with more pertinent local color than Grimm's fairy tales, ~~though nothing like the artistry.~~ As the basis of a systematic religion they struck me as hopelessly random, full of non sequiturs and pointlessness. Maybe the fault lay in my ignorance, or that of the professor. Maybe it was the reticence of his informants, ^{withholding innermost secrets.} ~~willing to reveal all.~~ Or maybe there never was a system -- nor any sought -- because consistency and meaning and logic do not exist in the real world.

Theoretically, a religion derived from ten or a dozen milleniaⁿ of residence on this Pacific Northwest earth should appeal to me more deeply than doings ~~on~~ ~~the European Northwest~~ in the European Northwest. But religion is only partly in the land. It's not me who has been ten or a dozen milleniaⁿ on the Pacific Northwest earth. I love the anecdotes about Eagle and Beaver and Salmon and especially, of course, Old Coyote, the regional Prometheus-Loki-Three Stooges.

aren't in my blood
 Yet they ~~don't go home~~ the way the fairies ~~are~~^{are}, dancing in the gardens of
 England.

Walking beaches of the Whulj ("the saltwater we know"), I see the lands
 and waters known by the peoples for milleniaⁿ. I can imagine the interrelationship
 between the People and Salmon and Beaver and Eagle. I can't feel it ~~because~~^{because of} the
 stinkpots razzing past, flinging aside beer cans and watermelon rinds, the
 striped shirts and skipper's caps and shades worn by Germans and Italians and
 Irishmen, not Haida or Kwakiutl on a slaving raid; ~~are~~^{because} the fishing boats lying
 in the tide rips off the points^{are} manned by Norwegians and Slovenes, not Scatchet
 or Klallam. After a century and a half the waters and lowlands are so
 Europeanized the sound of Christian church bells is hard to escape.

The high country is a different matter. The glacier margins -- so very like
 those my people walked in Europe ten or a dozen milleniaⁿ ago -- are very much
 as they were when traders from either side of the Cascades met at Stehekin to
 barter sea shells for obsidian chips; when whole peoples migrated to the high
 meadows in fall, after the salmon harvest, to pick huckleberries; when ~~during~~
 hunters clambered cliffs ~~and snowfields~~ to stalk the mountain goat. The ravens
 and eagles they saw, the deer and bear and squirrels, the waterfalls and clouds
 and lightning, the sun and moon and stars, are those I see.

Though the Bible-thumpers of the Whulj are no more daunted by the Bill of
 Rights than those of the High Plains, so that people must be careful how they
 behave in the privacy of their homes, or at least about ~~what~~^{how} they say they
 behave, scattered details of the old (pre-revival) religions have been
 described in the press, perhaps with some accuracy. The sewoyen or ceowyn

religion is reported to be practiced by some 3000 people in some 20 tribes of the northern Whulj. It is said to share with religions of Eastern Washington the spirit quest, wherein a youth goes alone to the wilderness to undergo ritual purification, then await the appearance of the spirit who will be his Attendant for life, and who during the revelation will sing for him the song that will be his personal song for life.

I'd shunned Marmot Pass for 39 years because I couldn't endure the possibility of meeting U.S. Forest Service rangers and other yahoos riding motorcycles on the trail where I as a Boy Scout underwent ritual purification (but did not meet my Attendant, ^{being} ~~alone~~ not alone but in a gang). When Congress established the machine-free Buckhorn Wilderness I returned.

The fourth day, once again fairly well purified, I sat on a rock promontory overlooking the Dungeness valley and reflected that if eyes were carefully averted from the Forest Service's purely spiteful clearcut some miles ^{down the valley} to the north, everything was as it had been, before.

A burst of barking startled me from my reverie. On a meadow bench a dozen yards below my perch a coyote, the largest and handsomest I'd ever seen, sat on haunches, looking me straight in the eye, bark-bark-barking, then pointing snout at the sky and ululating. A half-hour he sang for me, then trotted off. Before rounding a corner ~~out of sight~~ he paused and looked back over his shoulder. I let out a burst of barking and ululating to let Old Coyote know I'd learned my song, finally.

AN OLD DEHORN SHALL LEAD THEM

American

In the average community the only structures that strive ~~for a beauty meant~~ to exalt the spirit are the churches. Typically they stand in centers of commerce and industry and government, reminding of human hopes and values paid so little heed by commerce and industry and government. *Their rituals asides* ~~whether or not they ever hold~~ ~~services,~~ religious sects make the world better by erecting houses of God. Going to a church may benefit a soul less than going by one.

The advantage of going to a church is that the faithful can sing up a storm louder than a rock concert, writhe on the floor more enthusiastically than drugged-out children in a disco, and the neighbors never will complain nor the police haul the congregation off in a paddywagon, as they would a bunch of naked women dancing around a bonfire, crying "The Goddess is alive, magic is afoot!"

The disadvantage of ceremonies conducted within walls is the greater dependence on robes and perfumes, stained-glass windows and pipe organs, and the Bible. Where the preacher is wringing the verses and waving the Good Book like the sword of a Crusader beheading Albigensian heretics, folks may forget to glance out the window to see the trees and the clouds, as I used to at my little brown church in the wildwood.

On my way one day to a meeting of the King County Council, where the Scribes and Pharisees and Money-Changers were collaborating in the conversion of the green trees of Cougar Mountain to the greenbacks which ~~some~~ *nourish* land-developers as blood does vampires, I walked through ~~the~~ outskirts of the Skid Road, base of more missions than the rest of Seattle and the Pacific Northwest together. ~~Being, myself, in another an Old Testament prophet of young Jesus' age,~~ I was brought up short by a graffito:

"NO MORE 2ND HAND WORD OF GOD"

The location on a wall much used as an al fresco^c place of convenience, and the ~~scraw~~ wavering scrawl, suggested the author was a dehorn reeling away from the Star Bright Gospel Mission full up to here with bean soup and Bible. Yet his mind obviously had not been obliterated by denatured alcohol, gasoline and sour milk, Washington State wines, or whatever was his beverage of choice. His soul still was searching.

Turning his back on the second-hand word, where would he seek the first-hand? His manifesto was essentially the motivation of the charismatics. It was pretty much the reason John the Baptist went striding off into the wilderness. It's certainly the reason I do.

THE OLD ONES

Before the New Ones were the Old Ones.

The first for me probably were those huge Douglas firs rising so tall in the night around our campfire at Huckleberry.

Whitehorse was the earliest of the mountains, because of that winter week camped by the river, watching for the horse. Rainier, though, must have been ~~with me~~ always, rivaled as it is in my home sky only by the Moon (which, of course, was not far behind, with the stars).

Constance joined up in my time as a Boy Scout, both for being etched in the sunsets viewed from Puget Sound beaches and for walling off the eastern sky from the second trail night of my life, at Home Lake.

One look at Shuksan, in my first full climbing season, was enough, though the fullness of the peak was years in growing on me, not complete until I entered ^kNoosack Cirque, the deepest, darkest hole in the North Cascades.

A hole only less awesome, Luna Cirque, was the ticket ^{of admission} for the peak that stood above it, Fury; I spent hours on Challenger Arm gazing to its hanging glaciers. The gazing from Miners Ridge across the broad forest valley of the Suiattle River, and from the High Divide across the equally magnificent valley of the Hoh River, did it for Glacier Peak and Mount Olympus.

Alone at Kool-Aid Lake I ~~was~~ half-ringed in my nights of half-sleep by ^{the presence of} Magic, Hurryup, Formidable, and Johannesburg.

Forbidden's entry came as we scampered the blade of gneiss, ^{fleeing} ~~away from the~~ ~~summit to flee~~ the approaching squall; Komo Kulshan's, as we cramponed

the white slope of the Roman Wall in a blizzard of ice crystals glittering in the unseen sun; Eldorado's, as we teetered the knife-edge of snow in the middle of a cloud; Adams', when we were half-gassed by fumes from the infernal regions.

There were the silver firs we plunge-stepped ~~to~~ ^{through} in the deep snows of springtime, descending from a peak, finding our way in the dusk by the incandescence of their silvery trunks; the collonades of ancient red cedars along the Big Beaver trail ~~which preached~~ ^{whose sermon was} so powerful ~~that~~ that at the end of eighteen years the City of Seattle was convinced not to drown them for the sake of electricity ~~which it needed~~; and the mountain hemlocks who walked the meadows by night.

The trickle-creeks who whispered, the snowmelt torrents who bellowed, the waterfalls who washed my sunburned face and pummeled the top of my hot head.

The dipper met ~~at~~ dawn as it bounced at the knees on a boulder by the shore of Heather Lake, minutes after I first heard the long ~~trill~~ ^{trill} of the varied thrush advertising for a mate.

The golden eagle I ~~was putting my boot down on~~ ^{nearly stepped} after breaking out from a clump of stunted trees atop Grand Ridge, when it casually opened monstrous wings ~~and did not seize me in its beak as eagles used to in oldtime movies, but~~ ^{and} serenely let thermals carry it from under my boot, far out over the valley, high and higher in the sky.

My personal, private bird of twilight, its soft "ee ee ee" haunting the gathering darkness of riverbank camps.

The three bears met separately one June morning in snowfields of the Dosewallips valley, the three long ~~looks~~ ^{exchanges of} into each others' eyes.

Old Coyote.

The bluebell dancing in still air, a very great mystery until the bumblebee backed out.

The bumblebee.

~~The scenes of flowers whose faces I'd known long years ago they had
not learning their names, reaching their faces hundreds of other faces I'd never
seen.~~

We give the incomprehensible a name, "God," who therefore exists by definition. However, as demonstrated by the failure of any credible person in the whole of history to achieve a coherent, communicable mystical experience, the One cannot be known. The most that can be known, and the sole rational connection to the long flow, is the comprehensible many.

When an attempt is made to neatly package the many and shut them in a church, they fly out the window. There they remain while the One inside changes and passes.

The true religion, unsystematic as the world, is older than the warrior pantheon the Norse fabricated to accompany them a-viking; than the ravings of the self-flagellating Magian monks; than the engagingly dirty stories of the Greeks; than the loony superstitions of the Near East and the ^{tangled} ~~unintelligible~~ jackstraw of the Far East; than the phalluses of Africa and the erections on Easter Island and at Stonehenge; than Old Coyote of the Whulj and the fairies dancing in English gardens.

The Old Faith goes back to the wanderers at the margin of the ice, piling up stones, ~~and perhaps~~ to create new gods. In the green wilderness and the green farms of the low country, the Earth Mother fills every vale with Her

Attendants. But in the gray wilderness of the high country the gods are too few and too rude; a traveler badly wants more of them, and friendlier.

In the city, largely out of bounds for the Earth Mother, a religious person may have to make do with a One locked up in a church; ^{given} ~~enough~~ enough stained glass and a ^{superb} ~~great~~ choir, That may be enough. A wilderness pedestrian needs more. At every turn of the trail. In every dawn and dusk. And for sure at every campfire.

OLD DEVILS

A thing I liked about wilderness from the start was no bullies, no doctors, ^{and} no furnaces. ~~████████████████████~~ True enough, the Poopout Drag made us little guys think we were about to die, and on the slambang glissade from Flypaper Pass we nearly did, and if we'd not kept moving along the crest of Lost Ridge while "the wind she blew a living gale" ^{we would have and no doubt} ~~there'd have been no question~~ about it. ~~████~~ Kids who didn't ^{take consider} ~~think~~ all that as more fun than the keys to the candystore could go sniveling to the camp director and be driven ~~to~~ to Port Ludlow to catch the ferry to Ballard.

Mosquitoes must always have been there, yet I've no ^{bad} ~~especially~~ memories before Royal Lake, when I dangled a hook baited with a salmon egg in front of the fat trout, ^{meanwhile} brushing whining wings ^{out} of my eyes and nose, until I realized the trout were the mosquitoes' bait.

In the good old days we had no deer flies. They were brought in by postwar immigrants who came to work at Boeing, ^{and} along with the traffic and the smog ~~they~~ got much worse after the World's Fair of 1962; the Summer of Flies and Lightning would have made a Manichean of St. Peter.

Devil's club speaks for itself; a person who doesn't find the appearance of Aploplanox convincingly horridum should try using it as a handhold to ascend the cliffside swamps so common in coastal ranges ^{afterward} and spend weeks squeezing out poison barbs and globs of pus.

Nettles never have been much of a bother to me ^x but I recall leading the family gang along a trail grown up to my chest in greenery and hearing behind

me a chorus of shrieks from females whose faces came no higher than my ~~belly~~ ^{waist}.

Slide alder and vine maple made me a believer during North Cascades semi-expeditions; often in late afternoon as the tank of vital juices was running on empty, the intermeshed limbs would weave my legs and arms and Trapper Nelson into a Gordian knot -- whereupon the deer flies would close in, clacking their teeth, and the blow flies would hover in the background waiting their turn.

My rule with bear and elk has been to let 'em alone; they've been equally tolerant and thus I have no ~~bad memories~~ ^{dislike} of large beasts; where the grizzly bear roams, I don't. Porcupines haunt the dreams of my dogs. My most frightening encounter with a wild animal was in the middle of the night on the wilderness ocean when I awoke to find, by the beam of my flashlight, a skunk trying to haul away the bag of granola.

Until war's end our bunch never owned portable shelter; only when supplied by the Navy with nylon liferaft sails did we begin to view rain in the high country as ~~anything but~~ ^{less dire than} the end of the world.

The public envisions Boy Scouts as never stirring from the house without canteen strapped to belt. The fact is, or was, that such "handbook" paraphernalia was banned from Camp Parsons hikes. One scorching afternoon on the meadow ridge leading from La Crosse Pass to Mt. La Crosse, the ~~parious~~ Sunball struck to the ground half the party, one after another, and perhaps none of us would have survived without the mouthfuls of thin mud sucked up from the site of a snowpatch newly fried to nothing.

My first devil ~~stake~~ ^{mountain} was Cruiser Peak. ~~There were others.~~

My worst devil storm didn't come within twenty miles of me, but had it not been for the kitten and the puppy and the impending baby on Cougar Mountain, I'd have been on the summit of Stuart with Pablo and Lardy when the bolt hit.

Tiger! Tiger! burning bright
 In the forests of the night,
 What immortal hand or eye
 Could frame ~~they~~ fearful symmetry?

Did He smile His work to see?
 Did He who made the Lamb make thee?

Having returned from Ingalls Creek to the road-end, I sought to express my feelings to Pablo's folks. A congenital fool interrupted, beer and salami sandwich in hand, and cheerfully assured them they would meet their son, their only child, "in the sunset of your tomorrows."

Professional preachers are not so crude. Some (not all, not by a long shot) offer genuine help for grief, speak true human wisdom. Such men, a credit to their calling, do not ~~try to fit~~ ^{coerce} the Tiger and the Lamb into the same picture. That cannot be done without Magian gymnastics impossible for the man in the street (on the trail). Common sense says that God either is half-bad or has a companion Other, that it is nonsense to postulate a God who is absolutely Good but sometimes does things that appear Bad to folks whose minds are not large enough to comprehend the great big Goodness. Attend memorial services and ~~examine~~ ^{study} the faces of the family and friends. You can't sell them on a Good bolt of lightning.

Wordsworth trusted Nature too much, confident It never has betrayed the heart that loves It. When he heard "low breathings coming after me, and sounds of undistinguishable motion," he ought to considered the possibility he was

one step ahead of a pack of hashish fiends. He erred by believing in One -- a good One.

Hardy, on the other hand, so mistrusted Nature that he repeats over and over again the message that you can go to Sunday School and be kind to animals and make Eagle Scout and even so, on a glorious spring morning with flowers blooming and birds singing, stall your Model A in a grade crossing just as the Empire Builder highballs by from Chicago. He leaned toward a belief in One, not so much the bad One as plain Bad Luck.

The many -- the Old Ones -- are as good as any One with whom Wordsworth ever walked the hills among the golden daffodils, and as bad as any dark suspicions nourished by Hardy -- which is to say they are neither good nor bad, they purely are. The Old Ones bite us and scratch us, burn our faces and freeze our toes, break our bones and kill us, but there's nothing personal in it.

STRANGERS IN THE NIGHT

Robert Graves was adamant: "Poetry is born of the Moon." I assume he meant the light of the Moon. ~~Something very other comes in the dark. But then, man does not live by poetry alone.~~

When a sortie into the dark is germinating in the sub-basement of my spirit, I'll be sitting in the living room, television roaring and electricity blaring, and chance to glance out the window to the night, remember the heavy blackness pressing against the thin pane of glass as Mother and I desperately played casino, and my palms sweat.

This is madness of a sort as naked as that of the Near East in "Gibbonian" times, of England in the Civil Wars, of Sunday morning on American off-network television. Life is getting enough to eat and drink, keeping warm and cool, seeking love and friendship, fun and games, and, at the outer limits, perhaps writing poetry or singing. The person who goes beyond -- into "god intoxication" -- is as fitted for everyday society as a Viking berserker or a heroin addict or a land-developer.

Feeling a fit coming on, I ~~strenuously~~ have the decency^c to go off by myself. Nights alone used to wring me out so ~~vigilantly~~ strenuously[^] that by morning I'd be limp as a rag. However, I learned to choose camps where no river was close by to mutter and whisper and chortle, where the quiet gave me a ^{fair} chance to hear footfalls, or falls of paws, or of cloven hooves.[^]

But one June afternoon ^{ended} ~~was out of doors~~ with miles to go to a secure camp. I had no alternative but the banks of Bridge Creek, uproariously full of snowmelt from scores of tributaries, hundreds of peaks, a winter skyful of cold clouds.

Still, I was not defenseless. Tam o'Shanter had taught me how to cope with "Brownies and Bogillies." The night went down so smoothly that the "thump thump" beyond the circle of firelight only set my boots to thump-thumping, and the pairs of green fires that returned the glare of my flashlight were set thump-thumping by my cry of "boog-a-lee boog-a-lee!" Upon visiting the privy and finding on the path a fresh black statement by a cave bear, I ~~was~~ invited it to join the quadrille.

As generally happens at a certain stage of a solo trip, I sought to justify my absence from family and Cougar Mountain by serious ~~thought~~ ^{soul-searching.} I posed the question (aloud), "Why am I here?"

Answer: For the same reason the sperm fights upstream to the ovum, the babe wails in the cradle, the jolly boys expelled from the Blue Moon go looking for cemeteries with headstones to tip over -- to affirm, "I am!"

Is that all there is, old chum?

Not necessarily. A jolly boy may mature, join a union, an army, or the Sierra Club and thus declare, "We are!"

What when he grows old enough to feel his ~~death~~ death?

He may yet be able to look a flower in the eye and rejoice, "Life is!"
 And when the night is so advanced ^{the flowers have gone black} and the pot of punch so depleted ^(his brain has gone blank) ~~that~~

and he falls down and bangs his shin on boulders of the fire ring?

He may ~~in~~ ^{be able to feel enough} pain cry out, "Something is!"

Watching from the darkness with the thump-thumps and the cave bear, the Malignant Deceiver chuckles.

Bridge Creek bellowed on, voiceless and mindless. I had nothing further to say and whatever was left of my mind was of no interest to anyone save, possibly, Tam o'Shanter. By firelight I saw ~~the~~ the white water of the creek was inches higher than my camp. It was held in the channel purely by momentum, plunging straight head, unaware and heedless of thumpers, cave bears, and me, intent solely on filling up the ~~ocean~~ ^{the great reservoir} so ~~it~~, next winter, could feed the clouds which would dump the snow the creek then would bellow back to the sea, over and over again -- though due to the febrile condition of our sun, not ad infinitum.

Nevertheless, put that in your pipe and smoke it, Deceiver.

WHAT COMES?

I was saying my goodbyes when Betty suggested I take Buffy for company. She didn't offer Natash^a, the old sheep dog with the piebald eyes, nor Cailin, the aristocratic Shelty. Only the mutt.

The ragmop ~~wasn't~~^{bitch leaped} in the beetle. Not for any pleasure of the trip as such. ~~where~~ The other dogs rode in cars with noses out ~~the~~ windows, sniffing the great world; she flopped on the floor and lay catatonic. ~~where~~ The other dogs pranced up the trail and yapped at birds; she dogged boot heels. Her abiding rule was never to let the meal ticket out of sight. It wasn't the greatest but she was lucky to have any. As a puppy she was saved by a last-minute reprieve from execution for incorrigible homeliness. Often she could be found lying ignored in a corner of the house, growling -- at what? Follow the baleful gaze and it led to the Shelty, the family darling, or the sheepdog, the family love.

Buffy had ~~leapt into~~^{jumped in} the beetle hoping to be first in line for bites at ~~the regular~~ the regular after-hike reward for all the senseless commotion. When she discovered no other dogs were following, she tried to leap out. Whatever happened to all the dogs in a group likely would be good, ~~possibly~~^{including} cheeseburgers and fries. Whatever happened to her alone was certain to be bad. Since puppyhood she'd glumly expected that someday she'd be thrown away.

I stopped for gas; she ~~jumped~~^{flew} from the beetle ~~out~~ into a stranger's car and begged for sanctuary. I stopped at a grocery on the edge of civilization; she escaped again and tried to clamber aboard a logging truck. At the trailhead, though, she saw no alternative except to follow me -- my pack, that is, and ~~her~~ her supper within.

In late afternoon we topped the rise from Snowgrass Flat to the meadow shelf below lava cliffs and crags of the Goat Rocks, a burnt-out volcano. Near a snowmelt dribble I built a ~~fire~~ fire and heated a can of ^{meatball} stew, and that was okay by Buffy, and so were the bread and butter and the sugar cookies. The sun set in the ocean, unseen beyond miles of forest ridges. The snow cone of Mount St. Helens, most graceful of Cascade volcanoes, glowed pink long after the valleys were in blue night.

What in daylight had been a heather hillock had grown a foot taller and crept a dozen feet closer and loosened to a fluid blackness. A daytime snowpatch had thinned to an ectoplasmic whiteness hovering above the ground. The Christmas trees that dotted the meadow, backlighted by stars, totaled a certain number the first time I counted them, a different number the second time, ^{another} and the third, as if some were sneaking off, others arriving.

Betty had suggested I take Buffy because I was, in these years, spending more and more time on solitary hikes, largely due to the unwillingness of old companions to go with me. Betty feared I might be lonesome. She was correct in thinking that Buffy would give me company. ~~Indeed, thanks to her the night became downright crowded.~~

Buffy stared...

She did not, as usual after bread and butter and sugar cookies and licking the stew pot, put snout between paws and shut eyes tight. She snuggled close beside me -- me, ~~suspected~~ ^{expected} her executioner-to-be. And stared.

At nothing I could see. I flicked the flashlight, walked to the edge of firelight and flicked again. Nothing.

"Woof."

Not "Bow ~~wow~~!" That I could have met by jumping to my feet and brandishing my ice ax.

She stared left, "Woof." She stared right, "Woof." I turned to count the Christmas trees to our rear and she took a look and said, "Woof."

Wi' tippenny, we fear nae evil;
Wi' usquabae, we'll face the Devil!

I took the remedy not from dread of the Devil. With Buffy, I felt the possibility the fabric of the night might be sundered by a RIP! and a huge snout poke through and go:

"WOOF!"

IT COMES

The fall rains were late and the leaves hung on the boughs^h weeks longer than usual, richer in color ~~by the~~ ^{by the} day, reminding of New England. They began to drop of their own weight and still the rains held off; ~~and~~ not being pounded and soaked as usual, the litter heaped on the forest floor loose and deep and brilliant.

The yellow carpet so obscured the trail that on my return from Thrush Gap, between the central and east peaks of Squak Mountain, I missed a junction. One part of the maple forest being so much like another, I didn't notice the mistake until daylight was dimming and there wasn't time enough (my flashlight being safely at home) to return up the ridge to get back on track.

Trails were abundant enough. Trails led everywhere. However, in the cushion of leaves no bootprints told which paths were made by and for people. The state park on the mountain's summit is a square mile of dedicated wilderness; the cliffy west and east faces of the mountain, where the Canadian glacier squeezed and chiseled through the canyons separating Squak from its neighbor peaks, add several more square miles of non-dedicated yet de facto wildland. Divided from Squak by the merest two-lane strips of concrete are the Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park on the west and Tiger Mountain State Forest on the east, the latter connected by continuous woodland to the Cascade Crest. Beneath ^{and atop} the carpet of leaves were trails well-beaten to the destinations popular among raccoons, weasels, opossums, porcupines, and skunks; the ubiquitous deer and the occasional stray elk; coyotes beyond counting and two or three resident bear; and local bobcats, the ^{resident} ~~some~~ cougar commuting among its several mountains, and, rarely,

a wandering lynx.

None of the destinations seemed to be coinciding with mine. In deepening dusk I struck off straight down the slope, intending to intersect the May Valley Road and walk it back, whichever way, to the beetle. I was thrashing through waist-high salal when a shin-high log caught me in full stride and pitched me headfirst, crashing into a pile of dead branches -- snap-crackle-pop -- of sticks, fortunately, not bones.

The racket was answered by an explosion of yipping-howling-screeching-screaming-whining-moaning. I emerged from ~~the bush~~^{forest} onto the patio of the uppermost house on the mountain, the last outpost of suburbia. I started toward the door to apologize for my trespass but the windows were dark, nobody was home.

Except that little dog, left alone at wilderness edge with the shades of night falling fast, expected to defend the Master's home against the raccoons and weasels and opossums who came out of the jungle to snarl and scratch and bite, and the porcupines to stab, the skunks to gas, the deer and elk to startle, and the coyote and bear and bobcat and cougar and lynx to try to eat.

In the nightmares of the little doggy these had not been the worst that might someday, some night come -- that now had come. Tail between legs, ears flattened back, body pressed against the door which would not open, little doggy yelled, "Mother! Mother!"

I tried to offer consolation and only made matters worse.

I was the Pursuer.

I was an Old One.

INTERSTATE

Neighborhood streets offer pickup sport, any arterial can be exciting at night when the bars close or in afternoon when the schools let out, but "I" denotes the major league.

An Ordinary Point is scored by passing a car or by preventing a car from passing. To swerve from an open lane on the left to pass a car via the blind spot on its right is a double point, as is a last-second swerve into the right lane to **block** the attempt. To tailgate at 55 miles per hour is a point a minute; at 70, triple points; to stomp the brakes while being tailgated is to win one of the higher orders of points discussed below. To dive in front of a car to put it unwillingly on your tail is a point; if it must panic-brake to avoid rear-ending you, a double. Etcetera: whatever inconveniences, harasses, irritates, angers, or endangers -- scores.

The play is most intense at entrances and exits. The goal of a car on the on-ramp is to select a parallel car on the freeway and merge ahead -- this maneuver, if successful, garners a Crisis Point, equal to five Ordinaries. The goal of a car on the freeway is to so accelerate that the opponent must merge behind. (For the scoring when neither car concedes defeat, see below.) When leaving the freeway the aim is to begin from the lane farthest from the off-ramp and dart across the front bumpers of cars in all lanes. The aim of a car that suspects an exit attempt is to speed up and slow down as needed to block.

When an enemy persists beyond any chance of retreat and is forced to hurtle through a guardrail or off a cliff, or explode in flames against a concrete wall, or ricochet and spin across lanes and torch off other cars, previous point totals are erased because a single Blood Point wins. (However,

multiple Blood Points, awarded for more than one fatality or crippling injury, are valued for status in the record books.)

As in any sport, the bulk of the players are merely foils for the skills of the stars; they are the sea through which the sharks swim. Little fish nevertheless may win satisfying little victories. A person angry at the society that condemns him/her to waste his/her life manufacturing poison, selling garbage, ticky-tack^king Eden, building jets, or writing manuals on how to launch an ICBM, may score enough on the drive to work to keep him/her cheerful all morning. Bitter at the society that burdens ~~him~~^{him/her} with a crushing mortgage on a shoddy house, vicious neighbors, a stupefying wife/husband, and criminal children, he/she may score enough on the drive home to tolerate his/her family all evening.

Most non-stars would rather not play at all. As pedestrians on Manhattan Island sidewalks keep elbows extended, ready to jab enemy ribs, so, too, the unwilling freeway players lunge and snarl and score points, but mainly for the sake of a bit of open space, breathing room. They resent being sentenced to the daily torture and degradation of the freeway and to permanent impoverishment paying for cars that are expensive because they must be constructed not simply for transportation but to survive the game. They fantasize the final gridlock, they see the bright side of nuclear war.

The stars exhibit a variety of playing styles. "Fullbacks" drive the largest and most brutal bullies offered by Detroit, Germany, or Mars, accept no lane but the far left, and should an opponent suppose that exceeding the speed limit by thirty percent gives rights to that lane, crawl on its rear

bumper as avidly as an anal erotic. "Scatbacks" drive the smallest and nimblest dancers offered by Japan, France, or Mab and dart from lane to lane, braking and accelerating, as cute as the little girl jammers in roller derby.

For many stars the freeway is not a way from here to there, it is it; as with rink rats and disco jiggers, it is where (and only where) they live. For others, Milquetoast on the outside but Mussolini on the inside, the automobile is the six-gun of the Old West, the equalizer that lets little old ladies beat up ~~a~~ King Kong. For some the freeway is the place to freely commit crimes that if done afoot or on bicycle would earn them the gallows. (Note: Rules of the game are enforced by the police. The rules permit mayhem and murder but not with firearms. After three people were shot in a single year on freeways of a single city in Texas, a police psychologist commented, "It's getting to be like High Noon out there." However, unlike in the movie, in Texas the surviving duelists are sent to prison.) Perhaps most sinister are the stars who as youths thought themselves the hope of mankind -- and lost hope. They observe the freeway fellaheen for whom there never was any hope and in bitter disillusion strive to make the game so bloody it must ultimately be called on account of terror.

In the middle of the day, between the hours when the animals are being herded from one cage to another, play is sporadic and lax except near large cities. Commute time, when the apes are gibbering and tigers⁵ screaming in all the concrete jungles, is the playoffs. The reluctant player then may fervently pray:

Arise, my God, and strike, for we hold Thee just,
Strike dead the whole weak race of venomous worms,
That sting each other here in the dust;
We are not worthy to live.

There is an alternative: On the on-ramp, humbly signal for permission to come aboard, merge meekly, and similarly exit. Drive a steady 55 miles per hour (plus or minus 2-5 miles), but slow for a car merging from the on-ramp or angling for the off-ramp. If a car leaps in front, slow to make space. When a car tailgates and no slower lane is open to you, decelerate until the bugger has satisfied its passion.

The serendipity is this: No points can be scored against a non-player; when a star glances sidewise in passing to gloat and sees not choleric chagrin but a beatific smile, victory is effortlessly won. The system of ethics commonly referred to as "Christian" actually works.

a ghaſt

They put arsenic in his meat
 And stared aghast to watch him eat;
 They poured strychnine in his cup
 And shook to see him drink it up.
 They shook, they stared as white's their shirt;
 Them it was their poison hurt.
 ---I tell the tale that I heard told.
 Mithridates, he died old.

MATTER IN MOTION

The stars in the sky,
 The waves in the ocean,
 And thee, babe, and I
 Are all matter in motion.

--after Lucretius

We used to be enraptured by National Geographic photographs of Eskimoes building igloos, Watussi warriors dancing, and Scilly Islanders fishing, as they had for many generations in the same spots. Now, switching channels to find a football game, we flick past Eskimoes driving snowmobiles out on the frozen ocean to machine-gun polar bears, Watussi high-jumping around the globe on the Olympic Games circuit, and Scilly Islanders rioting at soccer matches in Manchester.

The only non-military world travelers I knew at the University of Washington in my student days were a professor who had been a Rhodes Scholar and another who had worked his way through school as an oiler on a tramp steamer. As soon as my son entered Reed College he obtained a passport, the only identification accepted on that campus for cashing checks. He then felt compelled to get it legitimized ~~with a visa~~ and with as much forethought as I give a trip to Seattle to buy a new typewriter ribbon he jetted to North Africa, not from a scholarly interest in Hannibal or the Visigoths or the Muslim religion but purely because thanks to the terrorists the airline had a special on.

The amount of motion by human matter has increased since my childhood by the hundredsfold, the thousandsfold. Partly, of course, this is because there is far more human matter. To use the state of Washington as an example, a bit of back-of-the-envelope calculation shows that the state contains some

600,000,000 more pounds of human flesh than when I was born. But the poundage of human matter is the smaller portion of the increase. For each pound of American flesh there are, nowadays, 25 pounds of metal, rubber, plastic, and hydrocarbon devoted to expediting motion of the flesh, 50 pounds of concrete and blacktop and metal in parking lots, parking meters, streets, freeways, bridges, tunnels, and ferries, and a like amount in housing, including summer homes and motor homes and hotels and motels and tents. Tossing in an allowance for knickknacks, the state has a grand total of approximately 100,000,000,000 more pounds of matter tied up in human flesh, housing, transportation, and toys than when I was born. If converted into the largest objects I knew as a child, this mass would give the United States Navy a Pacific Fleet of 1,428 first-line battleships, enough to fill Puget Sound from shore to shore and overflow into Admiralty Inlet and the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

Those of us born in the state often reflect that the crowding could be alleviated by requiring those not born here to take their 75,000 pounds of matter (for a middle-class family of four) back to Iowa or California. Native-borns being so small a minority of the electorate, it's politically safer to point out that there would be far more elbow room if the state's 900,000,000 pounds of human flesh and attached 22,500,000,000 pounds of transport matter were to remain in a state of rest, as in bed, carport, grave, or junkyard. A body occupies the same space at rest as in motion, but in motion occupies more space-time because in a given period of time it is in more than one place.

If the number of bodies is q , and each body has a volume of x , during z time they occupy a space-time of qxz . If during z time they move over y distance, they occupy a space-time of $qxzy$, and as the values of q and y rise, it becomes impossible in an alpine meadow to find a clump of bushes or a boulder to squat behind.

A single body of x volume at rest for z time occupies a space-time of xz . If in motion for y distance, it occupies a space-time of xzy . If the body is riding a motorcycle, the value of y is so large, and thus that of xzy , it is impossible to be anywhere in a wildland without hearing that single body/motorcycle unit's snarl, so ⁱlike a chainsaw or giant deer fly. As the value of q rises, that of $xzyq$ approximates an environment with an infinite number of chainsaws and giant deer flies. There is a name for this environment. Indeed, an emerging theory of cosmogony holds that in the beginning the universe was at perfect rest, perfectly peaceful. This was Heaven, the other name of God. At the death of God -- the Big Bang -- the entire universe sped off in all directions and continues to do so at steadily accelerating speeds. ~~When~~ everything and everybody is going the speed of light with never a pause, that will be Hell and the Devil will reign supreme and alone, the Lord of the Flies and the Motorcycles.

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT

Racing through downtown Seattle in a brandnew, fire engine-red, dealer-loaned Lincoln Continental sedan, I got to know Sir Edmund Hillary a little, as he and his bride and the protocol chief of the British Consulate and I pushed the buttons that activated the motors that opened windows and closed them, raised and lowered seats and moved them forward and back. Each of the four of us pushed the buttons handy to us while Tom, at the wheel, worked the master controls on the dash. It was a circus of a ride, sirens of the police escort halting traffic, pedestrians goggling at the big red car with the windows and passengers going up and down. Hillary seemed a very decent chap, as deserving as anyone to wear the boots of Mallory. However, I was glad he didn't return to Seattle to brag about his subsequent exploit of driving a caterpillar tractor across Antarctica.

In the 1920s Don and Phyl Munday chugged north from Vancouver in their cockleshell of a naptha launch, turned up a fiord to its head, hacked and packed through slide alder and devils club and grizzly bears to the glacier snout, and from its uppermost cirque ascended a summit next to "Mystery Mountain," a magnificent peak, supreme lord of the Coast Range, which until they found it had been purely a rumor. In the 1940s Fred and Helmie Beckey were weeks out of Seattle repeating essentially the same trip, except they climbed Mystery, by then officially named Waddington^x for the nineteenth century explorer who walked right by the mountain and never saw it, ~~what~~ⁱⁿ with the brush and the rain. In the 1970s a Seattle group flew north on Saturday, transferred to a helicopter, stepped out on top of the glacier at the base of the summit tower, ran up and down, and were home in Seattle for Sunday supper.

In the decade following World War II, members of the Harvard Mountaineering Club spent a series of summers in the Selkirks and Purcells and Monashee, the interior ranges of British Columbia. They relay-packed through jungles never before known to man, machete-chopping brush, building bridges over glacial torrents, struggling up cirque walls to basecamps. In a summer they might attain two or three peaks. A generation later climbers from everywhere (everybody by then ~~being able to afford~~ having as much money as formerly nobody did except Ivy Leaguers) were bagging a dozen peaks a week in those ranges. Helicopters carried them directly from jetports over the jungles and torrents, above cirque walls, to meadow camps a few minutes from the summits.

So it came to pass that a summit which in the 1950s would have rated feature articles in the Canadian Alpine Journal and the American Alpine Journal and Appalachia earned only a sentence in the listing of "Other Ascents." The fellaheen pull their pants on one leg at a time, just like Whymper, but nobody cares. History is over. Prematurely.

Writing in the New York Review of Books about Ivan Illich, "the leading contemporary exponent of the romantic anarchist tradition," Keith Thomas says: "Beyond a certain point, he argues, technological progress is counterproductive. It leads to environmental degradation and it defeats its own ends: the faster the means of travel, the greater the congestion and the longer the delays. Moreover, growth seriously disadvantages those who are excluded from it. The more automobiles and motorways there are in Los Angeles, the more impossible becomes the life of the pedestrian. Illich even puts it forward as a law that diminishing returns are bound to set in when people try to travel at more than 15 m.p.h."

History would still be there ^{for the making} ~~to be made~~ in Canada if ~~the use of~~ helicopters ^{from the mountain fastnesses.} were banned. But they are not and so it is not. However, history could be re-created by those with a sense of proportion and taste. They'd not ^{be featured in} ~~only~~ the journals but would achieve a deep satisfaction, feeling themselves the true kin of history-makers. Mountaineers ^{of today still} could devote an entire spring to climbing Denali -- all of it. They would set out in the late blizzards, dog-sledding over the frozen muskeg, dodging the moose and the grizzlies. They would return in the season of snowmelt over bottomless bogs and raging rivers. The time on the glaciers would be the easiest and safest part of the trip. It degrades a person to do merely this portion of the mountain and be home in Omaha the same week. Better not to go.

Why do the fellaheen climb Everest? Less because it is there than because nobody who is anybody hasn't been there. And because they don't ^{think} ~~know~~ a place is worth going to unless everybody is going there. They gang up at Everest Base Camp, and at Camp Four in Yosemite Valley, for lack of imagination. I once backpacked the Puget Sound beach from Tacoma to Seattle, sleeping three nights in the driftwood. On the final morning I made my escape from a flooding tide to the public street via the home of the first American to climb Everest. Jim Whittaker/is too gracious ~~to others~~ ^(another very decent chap who wears the Mallory boots well) to say so, but ^{his} ~~that~~ trip was just about the end of the story for Everest. My hike, on the other hand, he ^{recognized as} ~~is~~ more "important" than a baker's dozen of the current Everest ascents. It was probably a first.

The fellaheen enter the world just as their spiritual ancestors did, "trailing clouds of glory," but very quickly the "shades of the prison-house begin to close." Their imagination and taste are subverted, corrupted,

and destroyed by freeways, trail motorcycles, helicopters, and jets -- by the mania for speed. They could find worthy goals to pursue in post-history if they would ponder fundamental laws of physics.

Let us define T as the ^{degree to which a place is known, with a full T,} ~~minimum~~ sensation of knowing a place ~~well,~~ ^{or} being There. Let us define t as the amount of time required to achieve ^{(1) T, being the} this minimum Thereeness and stipulate, more or less arbitrarily, that it can be provided by a loitering, contemplative, walking pace of 1 mile an hour, ~~or~~ ~~88~~ 88 feet a minute. At that speed the hiker feels "There" on every step of the trail. Double the speed and he may feel half-There the whole way, or all-There every other step.

A person who sits an hour beside a river, in a flower field, or atop a peak has a Thereeness which is very intense compared to that of even a slow walk. Making various assumptions, it can be calculated as $T=88(\text{feet}) \times 60(\text{minutes})t=5280t$. That's a lot of T.

At a fast walk, 4 miles an hour, there is only $\frac{1}{4}$ of the time required for There^eness over the entire length of the trail; $T=\frac{1}{4}t$. Of course, the T may be very intense at this place and that, as when rounding a bend and meeting a female bear with cubs, or tripping on a root and flying headlong over a cliff.

In a vehicle ^{there} traveling a forest road at 20 miles an hour, $T=1/20t$, or would ~~speed~~ be the only factor. But ~~is~~ is also the added distance between the eye and passing plants, rocks, and animals. A distance of 5 added feet, as on a very narrow single-lane road, may cut the Thereeness by half, to $T=\frac{1}{2}t$, so that $T=1/40t$.

A vehicle doing 60 miles an hour on a freeway ^{has} a speed-Thereeness of $T=1/60t$ and a distance-Thereeness, assuming 100 feet from car to the shoulder shrubbery, and assuming the shrubbery is worth looking at, of $T=1/40t$, twenty times less than on the forest road; the two, combined, yield $T=1/2400t$.

deeply
enough
to have
the
vivid
feeling
of

A vehicle doing 400 miles an hour 30,000 feet above the ground combines $T=1/400t$ and $T=1/12,000t$ for $T=1/4,800,000t$; however, the T is only as intense as this for a person with a window seat.

Perched atop his tractor racketing across Antarctica, Sir Edmund experienced no better than $T=1/30t$. (The effect of the racket is not considered, though this factor alone can totally destroy T , substituting a "motorcycle"^{T.}) American's only Antarctic hero, if that is the proper term for Commander Byrd, had a South Pole Thereness, flying over in 1933, of $T=1/120,000t$. (For comparison, Scott on his final marches was achieving $T=4t$, ignoring the probability that dying of scurvy and frostbite entails the same loss of perceptivity as riding a motorcycle.) Sir Edmund ought to have been ashamed.

Byrd had no shame. Neither do the helicopter climbers of Waddington and the interior ranges of Canada whose virginity, I happily supposed in the 1950s, would outlast the lust of me and mine by centuries. One could wish the fellaheen would leave the wilderness to those who value it and work off their tensions climbing boulders on the outskirts of metropolitan areas.

When T drops below a certain level, it changes not merely quantitatively[†] but qualitatively, and more accurately may be designated as not- T or zero T . Even with a window seat, on a jet $T=0$ which is the reason for in-flight movies.

Jets raise a further question, one that Zeno would have enjoyed adding to his Paradoxes. Is it possible to actually get to Europe or Asia -- or anywhere -- by jet? At these speeds a person's Beingness is so attenuated by his flesh being thinly smeared over thousands of miles that ~~for~~^{at} any point along the way, $B=0$. There is nobody on a jet airplane. True, the Being which blinks out on takeoff blinks back into existence on landing, but the transit through 0 takes

a toll. A single trip to Wales or Greece may do no permanent harm, but families, friends, and neighbors of persistent jet travelers will testify that ^{after a while} there is nothing left of them except a slide show.

At what point does T change to not-T? The freeway commuter has no nature-Thereeness, only freeway-Thereeness, as ~~bad~~ ^{bad} as motorcycle-Thereeness. When does B approach O? Are the freeways actually empty of humans, ^{are} the seeming people actually attachments to the machine^s?

The ultimate attenuation is in the space program. President Kennedy promised to put a man on the Moon. Mercifully, he didn't live to see the impossibility, ~~of doing so~~ ^{grief-stricken} to learn as did the ~~scabbed~~ nation that at escape velocity humanity vanishes altogether and what arrives on the Moon is a Texas test pilot swinging a golf club, ~~and getting ready to run for senator.~~

We never will leave this planet. We thus had better slow down. Illich is on the right track but his 15 m.p.h. strikes me as being on the high side.

INTERNATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

Time-Life Books called to ask if I'd be interested in doing a book on wilderness of the Cascades and if I'd ~~stay~~^{fly} to New York to talk about it. I said yes to the book, no to the flight. ~~the~~ Chief Joseph had declared many years before, "I will fight no more forever"; in 1960 I had staggered off my last airplane and announced "I will fly no more forever." Thereafter, when the rumbling sky drowned out civil conversation, the laughter of little children, the music of Mozart, and the U.S. Open tennis matches, I scattergunned prayers to all points of the supernature in hopes of contacting an operation^{al} god or devil.

The editor flew to Seattle instead, hired me, quickly fired me; I banked the money and walked away clean, my estimation of the company unchanged by the episode. It was the National Geographic, the same year, which stabbed me to the heart.

Traveling to California to do a chapter for the Society's book on American wilderness, I was awed to be using the same expense booklets issued to explorers of polar wastes, the roof of the world, and Darkest Africa. The space for "gifts for natives" nagged me through the High Sierra. At last, before ^{departing} setting out ~~north~~^{for home}, I listed in that space: "Editors of Not Man Apart and office staff of Friends of the Earth, one lunch at Tadich Grill, \$53; Dave Brower, one large jug Tanqueray gin, \$18; San Francisco street people, one pound blue beads, one pound red beads, \$6."

That felt good. So did the subsequent invitation to a Geographic birthday party for John Muir, in Washington, D.C. Not only would I socialize with as nice a bunch as ever published a magazine or book, I'd fulfill a long-standing ambition to ride the Canadian National past my previous farthest east, Saskatoon, to the Laurentian Shield and the Maritimes and a connection south.

The invitation came too late for me to go by train. I'd have had to fly. Geographic, o Geographic!

Visiting Aunt Mildred and Uncle Les in North Billerica, during my year of childhood in Massachusetts, I ~~always~~ spent hours browsing through stacks and stacks of the magazine ~~← a complete run →~~ [^] dating to when vast expanses on maps were marked "unexplored" or "unknown" or simply left blank white. So they would remain until the (civilized) human foot had been there, one step at a time, with gifts being distributed to natives. Then there would be an article in the magazine, a new map that would be ^{universally} accepted as the definitive state-of-the-knowledge.

Uncle Les and Aunt Mildred -- in common with all ordinary ~~(non-rich)~~ ^{of the times} Americans, never could travel overseas or much of anywhere -- but they traveled everywhere on safari with native bearers, wearing pith helmets, handing out red beads and blue beads. Today's jetloads of packaged tourists/^{clicking cameras} for the dreaded slide shows have only the most tenuous Beingness. In his North Billerica armchair, settled down to study the newest issue of the magazine, Uncle Les was almost more There than the natives.

Travel has been praised as a force for world peace, on the premise that when two peoples meet face to face they cannot but understand and like each other better. However, ^{owing to} ~~what with~~ funny languages, funny clothes, and funny smells, the average traveler returns home with deep personal reasons for going to war against whichever nation he has just visited. What the world needs is less travel and more Geographics, published in the different nations by their own peoples. An African magazine doing an article on the United States would, of course, have photographs of American women in their colorful native costumes, naked to the waist.

While alleviating international tension, satisfying curiosity about foreign breasts, and saving everybody tons of money, the International Geographics would help reduce the noise level by supporting a shift of travel modes from the louder to the quieter. Millions can travel by train with less disruption of life on the ground than thousands by jet. Airships of the Graf Zeppelin species slide across the heavens more quietly than flocks of geese. Ocean ships would let us voyage from Seattle to California and back and never set wheel on a freeway. Certain of these means of getting about would be scarcely any more bother to neighbors than Uncle Les in his armchair.

A program to quiet the planet would begin with prohibition of extraneous noise in libraries, hospitals, churches, and the wilderness. More widely applicable would be noise rationing. Outside designated "free-fire areas" (including sports stadiums and rock concert halls) a person's legally permissible output of noise would be strictly limited. Absolute silence would not be the goal. A child at the age when its mentality approximates that of a chimpanzee ought to be permitted to yell and holler and bang a drum. It might be accepted in the United States that once in his life a kid deserves an oldtime Fourth of July. Should he survive with eyes and fingers ^{intact} and want a second chance to mutilate himself, this would be permitted, on condition the firecrackers be inserted in his body orifices.

A pubescent boy would be granted a certain number of "ya-hoos!" at beer busts; a girl, a certain number of squeals at pajama parties.

An adult might indulge himself for one year with a hot, loud car; for the next ten years his driver's license would limit him to vehicles with mufflers in mint condition and a maximum of 25 horsepower.

Trail motorc^εycles and light airplanes would not be ba_nned. However, since one of these makes more noise than 10,000 pedestrians, for each day using such a vehicle a person would be required to spend 10,000 days in handcuffs and leg irons, mouth taped shut, and no ice cubes in the drinks he sucks through a straw.

Draconian controls are unavoidable for air travel in public carriers. Terrorism, alone, can't be expected to do the job. A simple method would be to stencil a "ration card" on the body at birth. The ear lobe is suggested. A person debarking from a plane would have his lobe punched to show the miles traveled; when his life ration was exhausted the lobe would be cut off, providing airport staff a ready means of turning away illegals.

Most "business" travel is really just to get out of the office and on the expense account, ~~where the fun is~~. Conventions are justified on the pretext of mass idea interchange; in reality they serve to get a better job, to get drunk on somebody else's money, and if lucky, to get laid. All these can be accomplished in or near the home office with less cost and noise.

Such idea interchange as is actually desirable is more cost-efficient by telephone. To be sure, this device can be as annoying (~~as a jet~~) as a jet grazing the rooftop and its use must be as rigidly rationed as flying. The technical means are problematic; persons who feel as bedeviled by compulsive telephoners as by compulsive ^{jet} travelers have suggested that a device be implanted in the head of each newborn infant, set to explode upon his dialing the maximum-permitted-call-plus-one; a sophistication suggested by persons who feel particularly strongly ~~on the subject~~ is that the number of permissible ^{vary from one device to another and in every case} calls be kept secret, so that every telephone call from childhood on is suspenseful.

Reduction of air travel and telepone abuse would take us back to our old dependence on the mail. The postal service would have to be restored to its ~~1930s~~ 1930s excellence. This would demand a heavy subsidy, a logical source being a surtax on air travel and long-distance phone calls. The teaching of English in the public schools would have to be raised to the level of the 1920s, when a high school diploma guaranteed literacy.

The slide show might be replaced by the personal letter written at leisure over a pot of tea in a Canadian National drawing room, telling in words, not click-click, the majesty of Mt. Robson. One might even hope for a revial of the epis[†]olary novel, superb for filling the days until arrival of the next Geographic.

LISTENING SMALL

In an April morning, wearing queer clothes, long hair on face though not over shoulders, I clambered down a ladder from the bow of the Lady of the Lake onto a wave-washed boulder, as close to shore as the captain could nose the vessel. I teetered there a moment, ~~teetering~~ ^{dangerously} topheavy ^{from the Keltic} on my back, then leapt the ~~edge~~ deep water to dry land. The clickety-click and whir of a boatload of ^{solitary} tourist cameras recorded my return to the wilderness, ~~where I could be alone:~~

Too many recent days I'd spent in chambers of the King County Council among Pharisees solemnly telling lies, Scribes assiduously ^{scribbling} ~~writing~~ them down for transmission to the gullible Masses, Money Changers sliming along corridors on the lookout for the palms of Priests itching for silver ~~coins~~ and gold. They would all burn with King Herod in Hellfire eternally, but not soon enough to suit me, nor long enough.

I picked up the trail just where it emerged from the broad gravel wash of Prince Creek's alluvial fan and sidehilled upward in fresh green grass beneath handsome large Ponderosa pines. The plants were pumping out ~~their various~~ ^{the appropriate} aromas to attract ~~pollinators~~ bees, butterflies, flies or beetles, ~~rushing as they were~~ rushing to get their flowers fertilized and ~~their~~ seeds ripened before the summer came a-scorching; in semi-desert communities of this sort, as in the arctic-alpine, plants must hurry to link one year to the next.

Half a hundred species were in bloom: In cold nooks where the snow was not long melted were yellowbells, ballhead waterleaf, glacier lily, spring beauty, and trillium. In deep forest, the calypso orchid. On greening lawns, balsamroot's gaudy-huge sunflowers. Here and there, prairie star, primrose

monkeyflower, broad-leaved montia, fairy bells, blue-eyed Mary, spring gold, naked broomrape, chocolate lily, death camas, miners lettuce, Johnny jump up. When I sat to rest, crushed onion leaves informed me they were there; I picked some to chew on the trail. The snowbrush was barely in bud but the sun was baking resins from the leaves, filling the air with the characteristically east-Cascades "Ceanothus reek."

At 5:30 I dropped the Kelty on the lawn of Meadow Creek Lodge, site of many a rowdy revel in the prospecting era of eighty years ago, and more recently of many a genteel, contemplative summer vacation. The lodge was deserted in this early springtime, as had been the trail, not another human since I waved goodbye to the cameras.

The sun quickly dropped behind the high horizon of winter-snowy peaks rising ~~abruptly~~ from the far shore of Lake Chelan. A crescent moon brightened overhead. In premature twilight I sat by little waves lapping the shore, drinking a can of Rainier beer and supping on English muffins and Spam and Grey Poupon. Lights winked on across the water at Lucerne, a tumbledown old resort on the fan of Railroad Creek. Crickets racketed. Shadows went "thump-thump-thump" around the lawn. A hooty-owl went "oo oo oo." Distant waterfalls massed in a single faraway murmur. I closed my eyes on the crescent moon and the evening star.

The second night, again having had the trail ~~to~~ to myself the whole day, I again camped alone, at Moore's Point, the tip of Fish Creek's alluvial fan. In olden days, while miners were brawling at Meadow Creek, gentry of the Inland Empire came here by steamboat to attend dances at the hotel. The structure burned a short while after World War II, killing the caretakers, an elderly couple who ~~initially~~ escaped the flames but returned to try to rescue a cat. I once corresponded with a woman who danced here as a girl in the 1890s. Her

letters told about the dances, about the steamboats on the lake and the stagecoaches to the lake from her home at Winthrop, in the Methow Valley; about wolves howling in the winter night around that home; about grizzlies slaughtering the cattle. Indians rode ponies from miles around to stare at -- and ever so politely touch -- her ^{brilliant} ~~flaming~~ red hair. Owen Wister, a Harvard classmate of her stepfather, the founder of Winthrop, was a frequent family guest. She accompanied him and his bride on their honeymoon, a packtrain journey across the Cascades. Among her neighbors were The Virginian and Trampas and the other characters in the novel. Wister told her he moved the scene of the story to Wyoming because his publisher said it would sell better.

I spread sleeping pad and bag under a large cottonwood, its canopy of new leaves in that interesting condition where they resemble pigs' ears. Sure enough, I found an early morel -- ^{just} only one, but unusually large and ^{meaty} ~~solid~~ -- and watched it bounce around in the simmering pot of tomato soup and Spam while I sipped a pink gin and nibbled avocado slices washed in lemon juice.

The trail afternoon had been hot; in the shade of the cottonwood my thermometer read 70 degrees until 4:37, when the uppermost arc of the sunball slid behind the ridgeline; eight minutes later the reading was 62 degrees; at 5:37, 59. The lake was a mirror, not a breeze to ripple the reflection of forests and snowfields and cliffs -- and one tiny cloud. Wetnesses twinkled on my bare arm, I turned my sunburnt face to the sky for more, but at my gaze the cloud fainted away in a blue ecstasy. From the woods came the "ee ee ee" of Swainson's thrush, one of my Attendants.

The moon glinted on still waters and softly lit mile-high walls of the Chelan trough, where once a glacier from White Rock Lakes and Magic Mountain flowed by on the way to the Columbia River.

I awoke in the night to a stabbing pain in my thumb. The beam of my flashlight revealed a mouse on its hind legs, nose quivering, smacking its lips.

~~At~~ ^{The way} Along and lazy morning I sat under the cottonwood and would as soon have spent the rest of the day, the week, but there wasn't enough Spam and pink gin. I hoisted the Kelty for the last leg of the seventeen miles from Prince Creek to Stehekin. The trail passed through groves of noble old Ponderosa pine and Douglas fir, stands of white-barked aspen glowing with inner light, traversed in and out of slot gorges roaring with snowmelt from the edge of winter, close above. ~~It~~ climbed over the tops of cliffs to vistas up and down the 55-mile-long fiord, and dropped under the bottoms of cliffs, and blasted straight across the faces of cliffs. Save for a scattering of boats (the Lady uplake in morning, downlake in afternoon) and an occasional floatplane carrying hastier passengers, the lake was mine alone.

Not so the trail.

Atop a long, steep rise I sat to rest. Beating of heart quieted and heaving of lungs stilled. Far from the omnipresent rumble-bang-boom of megalopolis and the white noise of television I use to block it, silence rang loud in my ears.

Through the non-sound I heard air, stirred by the sun, breathing in the trees; distant creeks, individual existences ~~but~~ ^{joined} in a single hollow echo; flies and bees buzzing about their pollinating; and birds chirping songs of passion or contentment or whatever. These were the loud sounds.

Thirty-seven years before, on my first long solitary walk, during a rest stop on the Dosewallips trail the forest was winter-chill and tomb-still, yet one hemlock seedling -- one only -- danced in a gale. If some mysterious fury could torment one seedling among many, why could not I -- and only I among the billions of humans -- be flung about? Why not -- along among all the billiard balls in the galaxy -- our planet? The fact that sentient life exists subsumed and justified every lesser absurdity. The deviling of the seedling might be the work of God -- and it might be His maximum effort -- He being a teensy-weensy Deity capable of punishing a tiny plant for some microsin but with an omniscience too minute to ^{grasp} ~~comprehend~~ my existence. Unless, of course, I violated His laws, committed a miracle, reached down and took the seedling between my fingers and held it. This little God would not be flinging me anywhere, much less the planet, and He was the only One ~~in~~ which there was visible evidence. ~~But~~ To Him I would be a titan, an Old One to make Him quail and tremble.

Who were His ^acre[^]tures?

I began listening small, to hear the sounds of Lepitopdera and winged miscellany milling in the sunrays piercing forest shadows. Closer there were rustlings and cracklings and thumpings -- or sounds that would be called so if enormously amplified. Many were the work of gravity, pulling a pine needle from a tree to the ground, tumbling a grain of sand down an inch-high cliff. Gravity is one of the four forces, together with the strong atomic force and the weak atomic force and elect^romagn[^]etism that (said the June 1983 National Geographic) until some 15 billion years ago, "just before Planck time, 10^{-43} second -- a tenth of a thousandth of a millionth of a billionth of a trillionth of a trillionth of a second after the big bang," were all one -- the One. But

that was then.

Many of the little sounds were from creatures. A brown mound several feet high and wide teemed with large ants, their bodies half-black, half-red. I've often seen such mounds, including one in our woods on Cougar Mountain, and have sat watching for long minutes, and never have figured what they're up to.

I've also often seen, and now saw again, a line of tiny red ants moving up the slope and moving down the slope, in equal numbers each way. I traced their route in both directions to the limits of my vision, ^{not far enough to reveal where they were coming from, where they were going.} They were not traveling randomly and they were not scattered across the slope. They kept strictly to a narrow highway ~~that~~ linked roots, rocks, twigs, and leaves and, where none of these was available, struck off cross-country in the duff, over ridges of pine needles, around pebble mountains.

I was sitting amid thousands of ants in two separate civilizations, the one scurrying this way and that in a small space as randomly as humans in a shopping mall, the other traveling as incessantly to and fro as humans on freeways. Neither civilization evidenced any awareness of the other, nor of me.

I could have made them know I was there. I recalled, years before, poking a stick into an ant log to uncover the interior. Instantly the ants changed pace from a slow creep to a panic scramble, rescuing egg cases from this earthquake-volcanic eruption-tsunami-nuclear bomb. I remarked to my hiking companion ^{that} I felt like God. He, ~~being~~ a devout Catholic, drew away ~~from~~ ^{me} lest some of the Wrath spill on him.

I wouldn't meddle with the ants now. The only reason an Old One could have for doing that was ego (unless, of course, He were a bear.) There could be no macroscale satisfaction from meddling with the microscale. None of this had anything to do with me. Nor had the beetles, the spiders, the grubs, nor the worms I'd have heard underground had I been able to listen small enough.

It's lonesome, being an Old One.

I'd fled Seattle to escape the Pharisees and Scribes and Money Changers -- and Herod¹ the ineffable, eternal Herod. In queer clothes and long hair I'd come to the wilderness, to be alone.

I was ^{surely and} ~~that,~~ purely and absolutely. The flowers I saw, they weren't blooming for my eye. The birds I heard, they weren't singing for my ear. These days on the trail, these nights in camp, it was if I didn't exist.

--Ah, but there was the mouse who mistook my thumb for a sugar cookie.