

# Photoweb Northwest X.17.2008

*24 new images & texts*

*made in the autumn*

*High Wallows—*

*by Cliff Crego*



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*Snowy Passage, North / South crossing over Horton Pass, Eagle Cap Wilderness*

October is the month that the Wallowas change from

the outward-bound energy of bright major keys and  
shining granites of every description, to the darker  
keys of minor and moody, unpredictable skies.

One can have nine days of spectacularly clear skies.  
And then get slammed by a sudden cold front.

One can have a couple feet of snow. And then watch warm  
chinook winds melt it all in a day.

For me, it's the time when the poet tunes his or her lyre  
of peace to the phrygian of minor, with the half-step  
of the sadness of sadness so close, so proud, so full  
of resistance, but always ultimately giving itself  
back to the fundamental, the ground, the Earth.

It is a time of moons as big as hope itself, and  
springs that run so cold and clear they resemble  
flowing icy quartz crystals.

And yet, how strange, how strange, I say to myself over  
and over again. There is no one there. There is no one  
there.

## EPITHETS OF A SPECIES

—for David Landrum

*Miraculous. Mischievous. Miserable.*

Epithets of a species placed  
in the order of your choice.

*Mischievous. Miraculous. Miserable.*

Born naked into a web of dependencies  
in a harsh, brutal, indifferent world.

*Miserable. Mischievous. Miraculous.*

Instrument of the mind, a compassionate  
intelligence of infinite subtlety that mirrors  
both itself and the whole.

*Miraculous. Miserable. Mischievous.*

Sole life-form that till the end of time  
must walk the sharp knife-edge of its  
own self-destruction.

*Miserable. Mischievous. Miraculous.*

The choice of epithets is our own.

*Broken Bridge Camp,  
Eagle Cap Wilderness,  
Oregon, X.29.2008*



[Stonebreak](#)  
[Flowforms](#)



*Streamside*  
*Fieldwork—*  
*VII.30.08*



*Alpine*  
*Geometry*



*Fireweek—*  
*flower form*



*Thimble*  
*Berry*  
*Leaf*



*Moon Lake—*  
*Mirrors of Light &*  
*Sound*



[Upper Lake](#)  
[&](#)  
[Three Miniatures](#)



[Holly Brook](#)  
[3-step](#)



[Quaking Aspen](#)  
[Leaves](#)



[Glacier Polish—](#)  
[niche erratics](#)



[Mandelbrot Fractal V](#)  
[&](#)  
[LOVE IS ROUND](#)



[Right of the](#)  
[Line!](#)





*Stonebreak Flowforms, Pine Lakes, Eagle Cap Wilderness*  
On the road in the American Northwest.

## THE POOL OF LIFE

—a prose poem meditation

The bite of a trout breaks the surface of the water's morning calm . . .

Small fish are protected by their lightning-fast speed;  
Large, by their greater weight and water-wise ways.  
But neither is safe from the folly of the farmer's banker as he in his thirst unquenchable taps off the last drops of the pool's water.

O round pool of an alpine tarn, waves resonating,  
ringing out into the distance. Who is to say where they stop? See the subtle society of their merging, their complex composite forms.

Some cultures just rush right by, so full of fear are they that the banker will lock his doors forever before they can make a final run on their cash. Others, give the reading of such waves their complete and utmost attention, protecting the quiet waters upon which they are composed from interferences undue.

As the autumn morning shades into afternoon, a lone golden eagle turns wide, soaring circles above the pond, first sun-wise, then widershens. I lay back on the soft heather tundra and remember images from the past. "*Sempre solo, tutti cresti!*" says the proud Italian mountain farmer. Not far away, a man came out of the time-warp of glacier ice, Ötzi, more than five thousand years old, with boots—see the miracle!—made of four different kinds of leather and a layer of matted straw for warmth.

Who is to say . . . Out of the ice . . .

Perhaps that is all we are. Just patterns of waves, and mostly water.

*Broken Bridge Camp,*



Eagle Cap Wilderness,  
Oregon, X.29.2008



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| [Map](#) | [TOC: I-IV](#) | [TOC: V-VIII](#) | [Image Index](#) | [Index](#) | [Text Only](#) | [Download Page](#) | [Newsletter](#) | [About P/P](#) | [About Cliff Crego](#)

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*Alpine Geometry, Muir Lake (Crater Lake), VII.22.08 evening, looking Southeast,  
Eagle Cap Wilderness . . . On the road in the American Northwest.*

## WEATHER IN THE WEST

3 months of hot as hell,  
3 months of cold as hell,  
and 3 months of *lord-knows-what*  
in between.

## ALPINE GEOMETRY

Horizontal lines of water,  
vertical lines of trees,  
everything else *fractals*  
in between.

*Broken Bridge Camp,  
Eagle Cap Wilderness,  
Oregon, X.29.2008*



*Fireweed Flower Forms, (Epilobium angustifolium, a member of the Evening Primrose family, and a circumpolar species of great beauty) Eagle Cap Wilderness*  
**On the road in the American Northwest.**

## THREE METAPHYSICAL MINIATURES

(I)

We shape the world and the world shapes us.

To love the plants is to know them. To know plants is to make them your friend. To make plants your friend is to greatly expand the happy circumference of the circle of your community. The child who grows up safe, protected and able to learn within such a circle of plant-friends will receive the gift of a wonderfully enriched and lasting notion of home.

(II)

We shape the world and the world shapes us.

Just as no one ever wanted to cloud the skies with the smoky haze of accumulated car exhaust, or wanted streams to run muddy with human waste, no one ever intended the world to become a noisy place. But noisy it is, all the same.

And, now that noise has become a part of practically every landscape—even the most isolated and highest mountain ranges have jets roaring above them—how shall we ever know what the deeper, more subtle effects of noise really are? On the human psyche? Or on Nature as a whole? For the question has in a way become: where are the control groups to be found? And where is there by now even a single researcher to be had who has not been to some extent profoundly conditioned—even while still in the womb—by a sea of surrounding noise?

I wouldn't pretend to know, but my guess is that noise works on the mind something like a contracting air-tight



room. As the noise levels increase, the walls of the room close in and the pressure builds. Finally, one finds one's face pushed up against the wall, until one can no longer hear oneself talk, or even think. An ur-scream of almost unbearable angst would almost certainly be the result. Remarkably, no one designed this environment, or intended this to happen. It just did.

I sometimes ask myself what would be the composite sound if we were all to cry out like this together, at the same time? We may soon find out.

III)

We shape the world and the world shapes us.

Every habit quickly becomes its own formative cause. And there's nothing more habit-forming than getting something for nothing: plunder of war, slavery, compound interest, theft. Who will be the first to demonstrate the simplicity and power of a new ethics, where work is exchanged equitably for work, and time is exchanged in equal measure for time, and no one has the right ethically to more land than to meet his or her family's, or collective or community of friend's, needs?

*Pine Lakes Camp,  
Eagle Cap Wilderness,  
Oregon, X.28.2008*



*Thimble Berry Leaf, October aspect, (Rubus parviflorus, member of the Rose family)*  
*Eagle Cap Wilderness*

## LEAVES

A single maple leaf  
falls upon my page,  
marking the passage  
of this most liminal of seasons.  
Sharp north wind  
rising high above the sound  
of cold rushing water,  
scattering yesterday's hopes  
of where I'd be today, and today's  
thoughts of where I'd  
be tomorrow.

## CONSERVATION

Conservation is a way of dealing with Nature's fundamental asymmetry: that growth is *slow*, and destruction *fast*.

## ***CULTURE OF CHAIRS?***

The first person to come up with a chair had back-pain.  
Then he gave it to the rest of us!

## ***MUSIC?***

*Music?* The one thing humans do that makes  
the rest of Nature jealous.

*Broken Bridge Camp,  
Eagle Cap Wilderness,  
Oregon, X.29.2008*



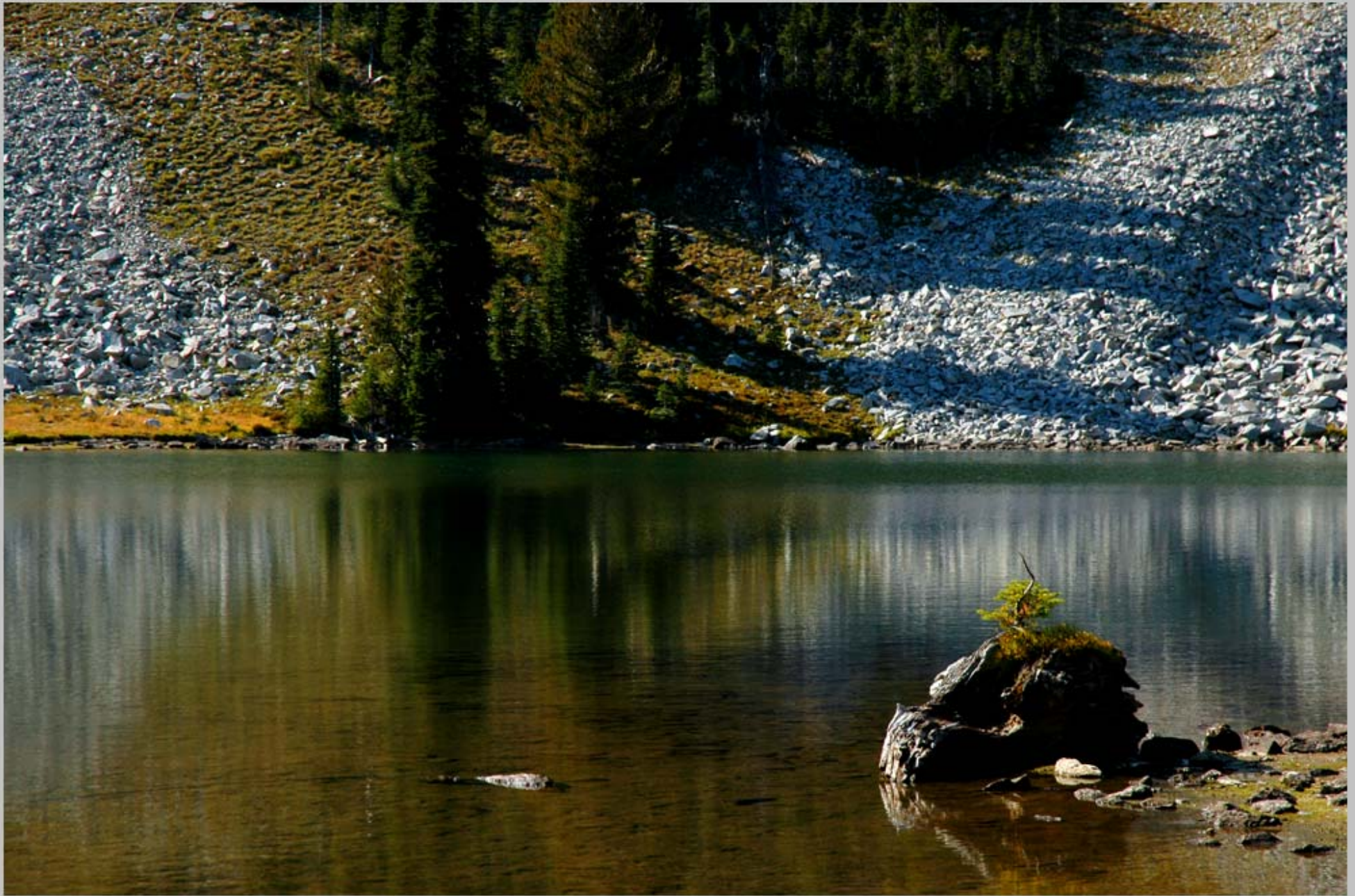
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| [Map](#) | [TOC: I-IV](#) | [TOC: V-VIII](#) | [Image Index](#) | [Index](#) | [Text Only](#) | [Download Page](#) | [Newsletter](#) | [About P/P](#) | [About Cliff Crego](#)

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*Moon Lake, end of September afternoon . . . Eagle Cap Wilderness*  
On the road in the American Northwest.



Here is a little set of three 37-step poems which plays with the theme of mirrors, of reflection not just of light, but also of sound. In order for a variation form like this to really flower, one needs to do them in sets or sequences. Try reading them out-loud to get a sense of how the rhythms and accents change in surprising ways while still keeping to the basic 37-step pattern:

## Mirrors of Light & Sound

(I)

High walls of contrast,  
flat surface of an alpine lake, giv-  
ing back the wind and clouds and moon

and distant

stars. Mind of Earth, eye  
that rejects none, and accepts all.

(II)

Flat, even surface  
of neutrality, water re-  
flects, receives both a god's self-love,

and the thoughts

of humble fishes  
caught in the swirl of a moth's wings.

(III)

Mirrors made of sound,  
piano-forte of the mind,  
sets of strings tuned to resonate

with the voice

of Love's sympathy.  
O sound of the soul, eternal.

*Pine Lakes Camp,  
Eagle Cap Wilderness,  
Oregon, X.29.2008*

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*Upper Lake, on the way to Horton Pass, main North / South axis . . . Eagle Cap Wilderness*  
**On the road in the American Northwest.**

## FIVE METAPHYSICAL MINIATURES

(I)

Symbols refer to meaning as currency refers to value:—only in a highly abstract and intellectual way. The danger with such abstraction is that it tends to wander off on its own, losing its basis in actual fact.

Eventually, symbols may refer only to other symbols, meaning then becoming merely a systemic property inferred from the symbols themselves;

Likewise, value may no longer be grounded in natural richness, but simply in more currency itself.

Before we realize it, it will seem logical to say that life began with a bang, and markets must end with:—a crash.

(II)

*Money?* A movement which always seems to be going in the wrong direction.

(III)

Chance *proposes*; Intelligence *disposes*.  
No one can predict which flower the butterfly will pass by next.

(IV)

*Simplicity?* In *Politics*, the most radical idea is simplicity; In *Art*, the most difficult idea is simplicity; In *Science*, the most necessary idea

is simplicity; In *Religion*, the most mysterious,  
arduous, complex idea, is simplicity.

(V)

How complicated the ways we wander  
once Truth is lost;

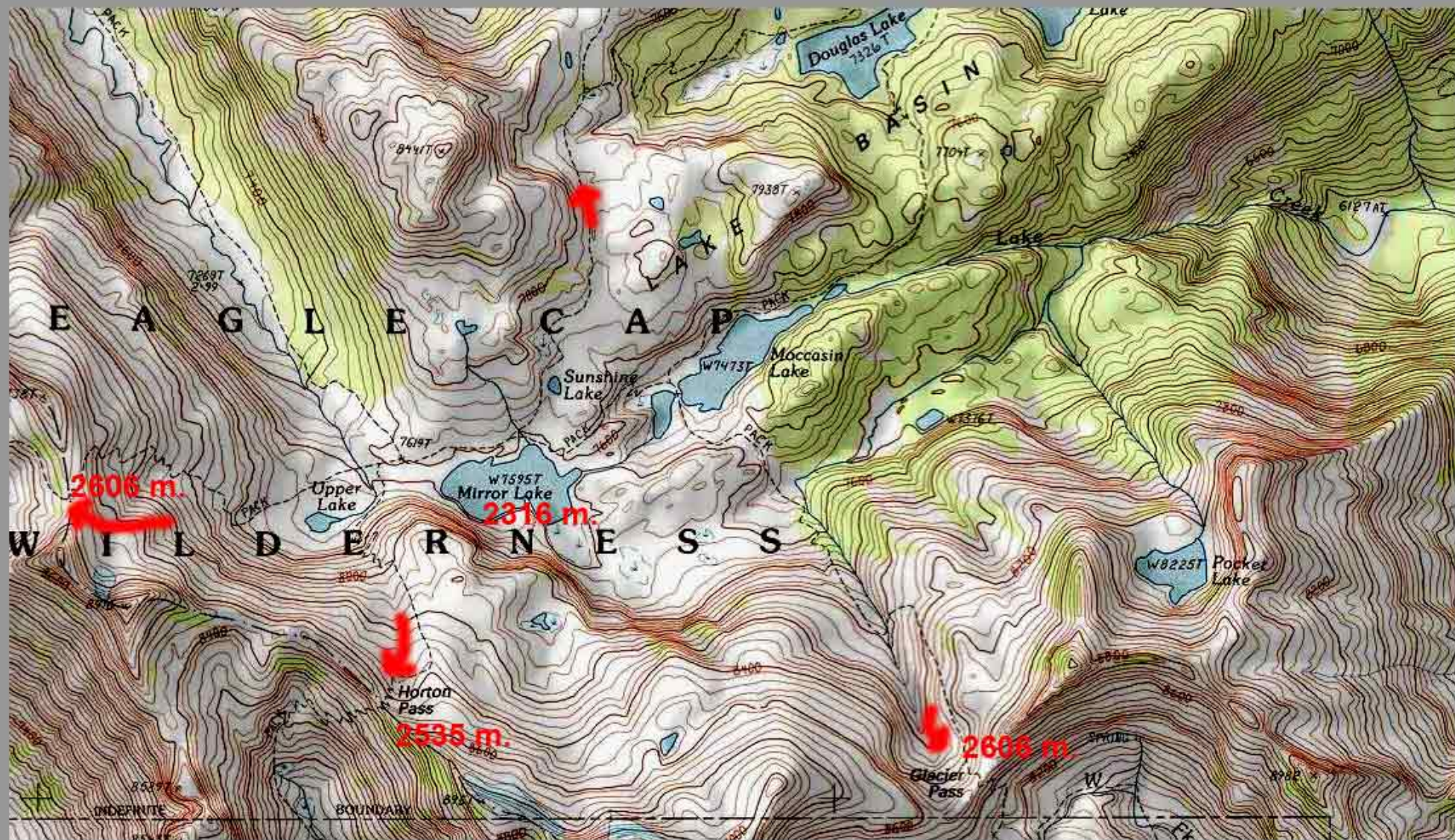
How needless the wars,  
how without meaning the waste.

from **100 MINIATURES**



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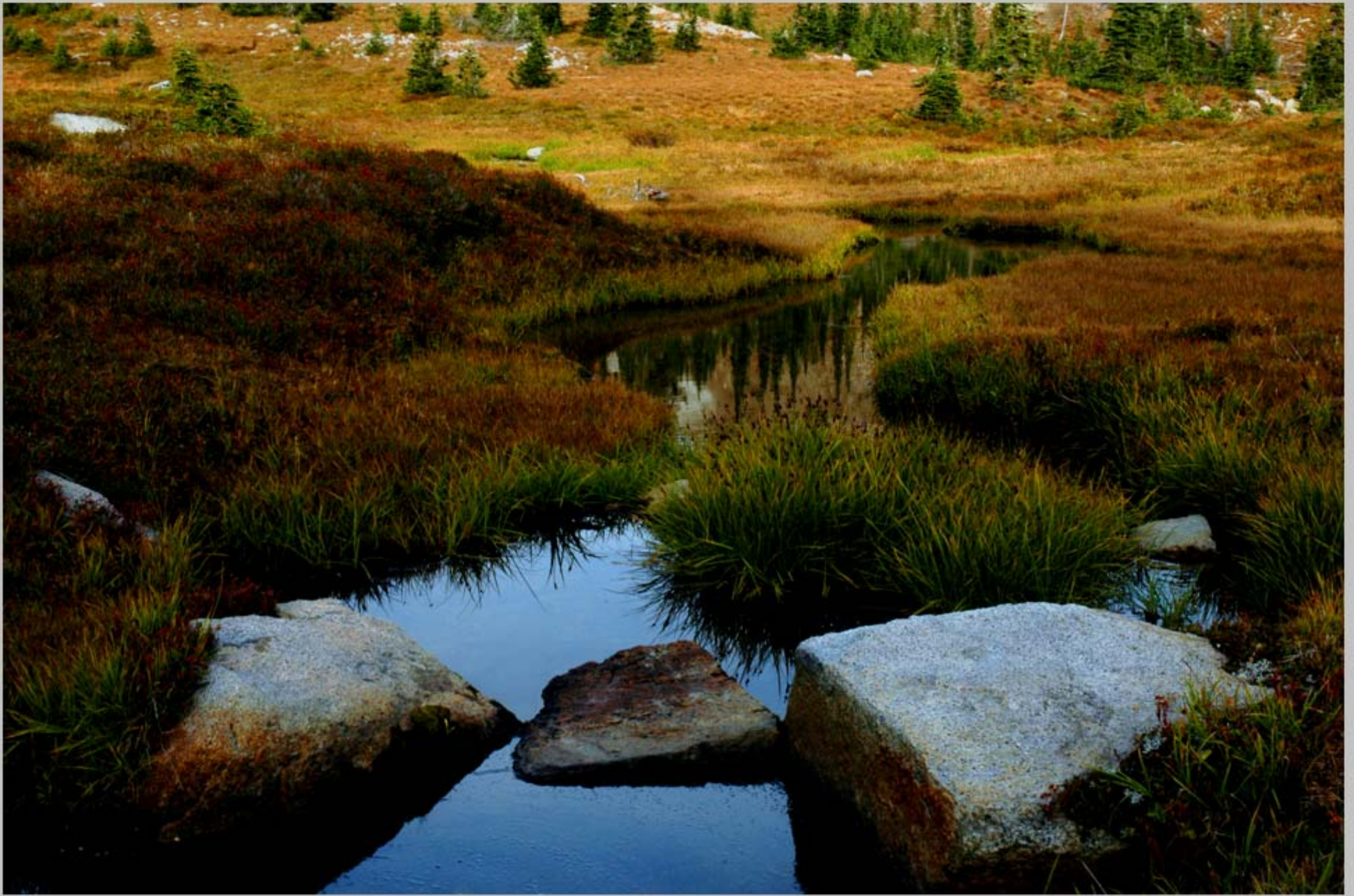




*TOPO Lakes Basin, Eagle Cap Wilderness . . .*  
**On the road in the Northwest of America.**

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*Holly Brook 3-step, Eagle Cap Wilderness*  
On the road in the American Northwest.

## ON THE MASCULINE ENERGY OF CONTROL

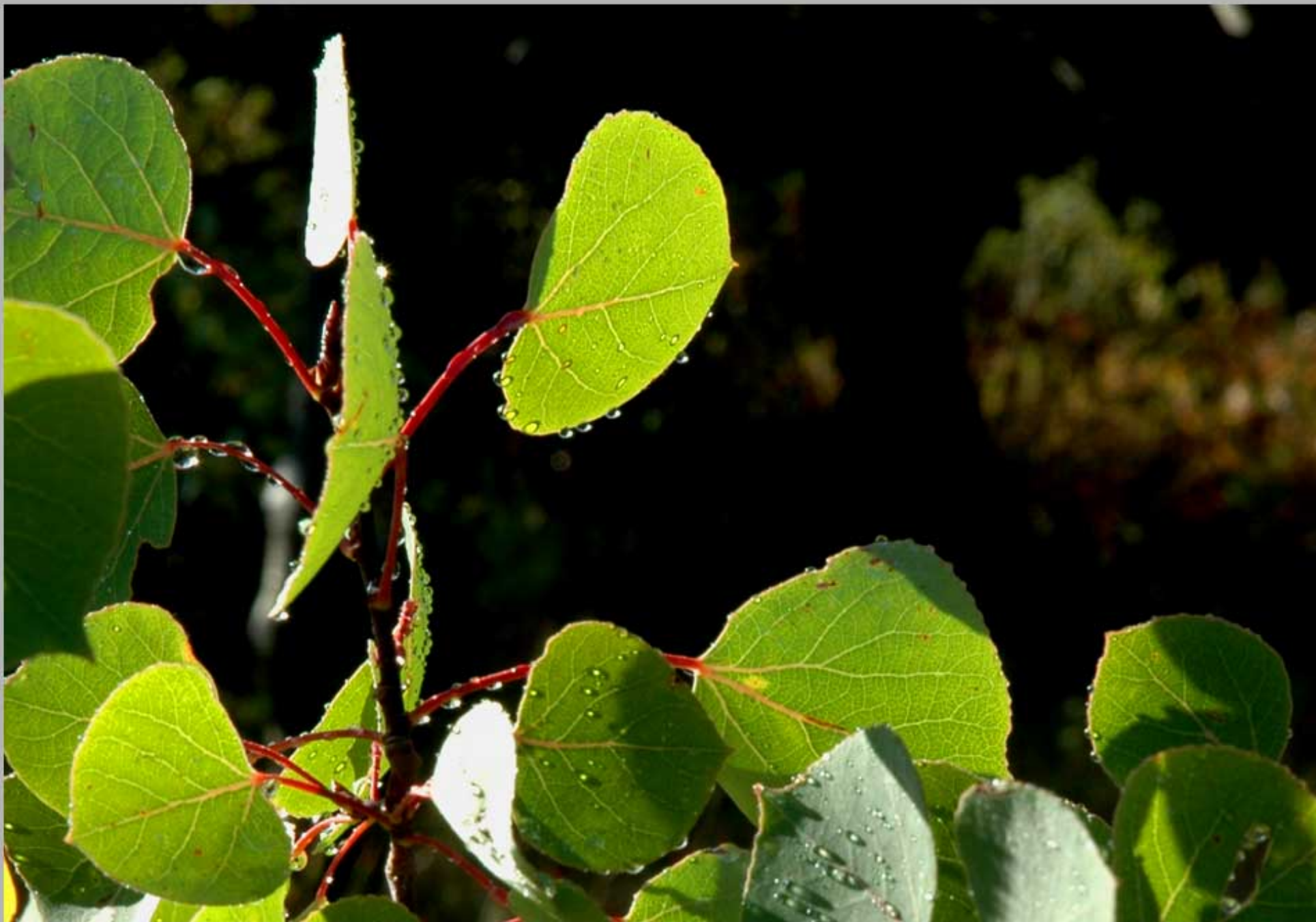
There's something about the decidedly masculine energy of control that loves the crisp, clear, straight lines of a bullet's trajectory. Think of it:—straight walls, straight pipes, straight roads.

Pity the time when women no longer cry out that life is not only a matter of the shortest, most efficient route between points *a* and *b*, but that there is more, that life is from another perspective essentially round. And that time is not just an arrow flying fast and furious to its ultimate end, but also a mysterious rhythmic pulse of wheels within wheels within wheels that comes round with the miracle of each new birth.

Pity the time when women acquiesce in their silence and become at once both sad imitators and tragic victims of this one-sided, extraordinarily powerful, but oh-so-incomplete straight-line universe of men.

*Broken Bridge Camp,  
Eagle Cap Wilderness,  
Oregon, X.29.2008*





*Quaking Aspen Leaves . . . (Populus tremuloides, most widely distributed tree of North America.) On the road in the American Northwest.*

## THE ASPEN OF FORGETFULNESS

Some things we wish to remember; others, we'd rather forget. The latter we'd prefer to see turn yellow and dry, withering away till they fall like autumn leaves to the ground, feeding the fertile humus of some common past under our feet.

Descending a steep southern slope, I stop to rest a while under an old doug-fir. The late-summer draw is dry, but still full of the lush green of quaking aspens.

Heart-shaped leaves on long, slender stems, some say the most beautifully proportioned leaf of all deciduous trees, their blades now quivering in the gentle afternoon wind like the soft skin of a young woman first falling in love.

The sound of the leaves glistens with light-filled silences between the green blades, the shape of the whole coming in slow, easy waves that seem to say in a receding, ever-softer echoing, "*Let it go. Let it go. Let it go.*"

I look for a pen to write something down, which I can't find, and then look at the new blank page I had ready. This I fold up and put back into my pocket, as I shoulder my pack, stand and start walking again down the hill, happy to have rested a while among aspen and fir, and forgetting about all those things in the past that now seem continents away, that I really didn't intend to, didn't want to, really didn't need to say.

*Camp Lost & Found,  
Eagle Cap Wilderness,  
Oregon, VIII.17.2008*





*Glacier Polish, niche erratics, Eagle Cap Wilderness*  
On the road in the American Northwest.

## WAR MEM DEAD

*—for Dickevicki,  
Vietnam Vet, lover of poetry, and friend  
on many of the happy backroads  
of my Berkeley days*

Imagine two flocks of white doves released  
at a ceremony's end up into the bright morning air, but that  
they remain by some tragic mistake tethered to the ground.  
The birds fly up to the heavens, but fall just as quickly back to  
the earth in a sudden tug of violence. Yet all present,  
because of their own grief, their own great personal loss,  
seem utterly unaware of this terrible suffering of the doves.  
Just so, at the end of this wall, remain two questions which  
the heart releases, and which flutter helplessly about in need  
of some resolution, some serious, believable, answer:  
Where are the other names,  
the names we cannot pronounce,  
the names that would have increased  
the wall's already temendous, horrible length  
at least five-fold?  
And will this be the last such wall,  
the last such war,  
or shall we repeat again, and then again, the same

wholly unnecessary, brutal, mistake

of making more of such wars,

and of such walls?

At the end of the wall remain two questions, questions

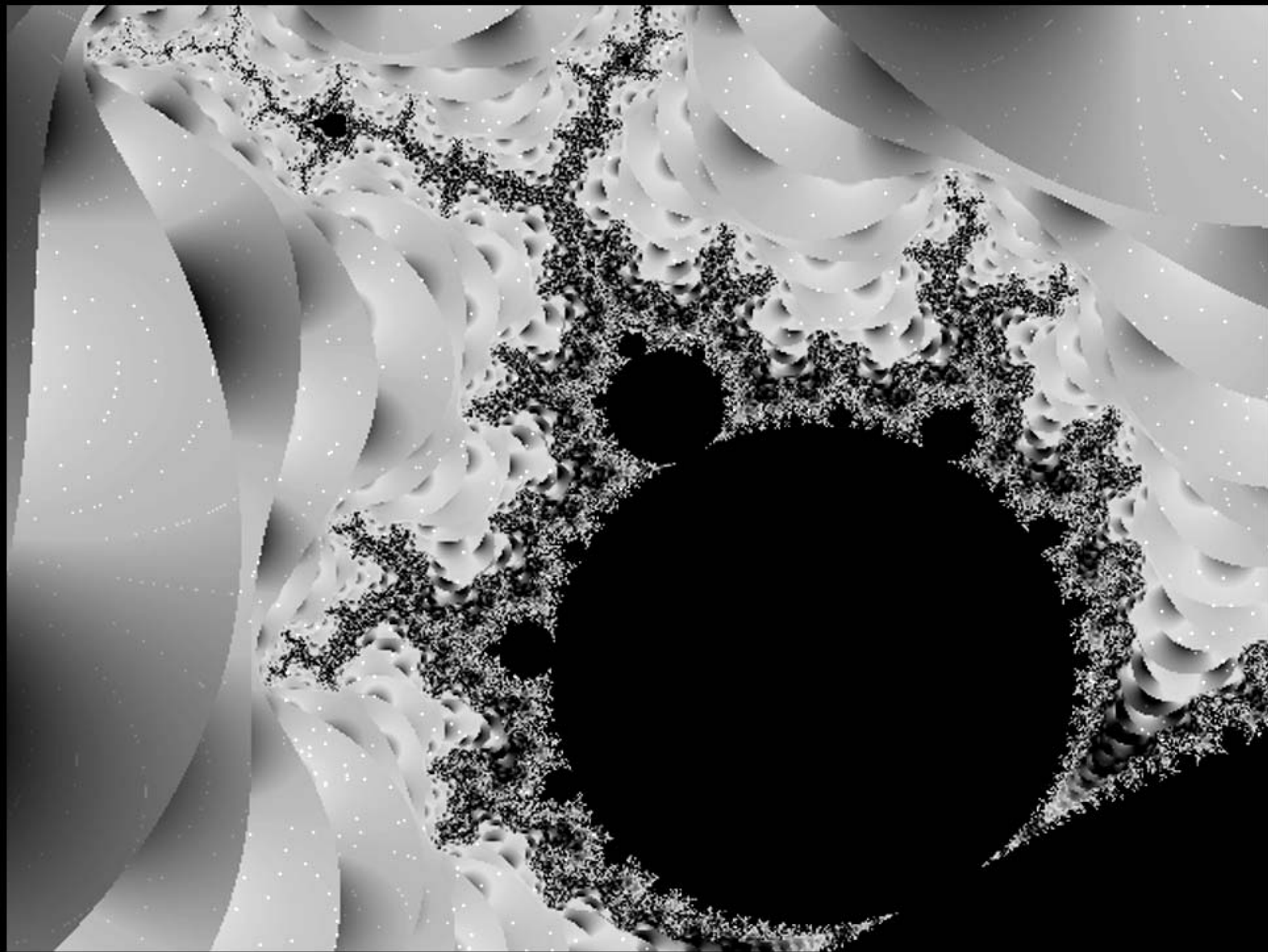
a child might ask that the heart releases, and which flutter

about in need of some resolution, some serious, believable,

answer.

*Broken Bridge Camp,  
Eagle Cap Wilderness,  
Oregon, X.29.2008*

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*Mandelbrot Fractal V, generated with XaoS . . .*  
**On the road in the American Northwest.**

## **LOVE IS ROUND**

Love wants to come round.

The performer who must sing

in a space without echoes

quickly cancels

future

engagements.

## **HABIT OF PHOTOGRAPHY**

When all the world

begins to look

like a photograph,

it is time

to put the cameras

away.



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[Map](#) | [TOC: I-IV](#) | [TOC: V-VIII](#) | [Image Index](#) | [Index](#) | [Text Only](#) | [Download Page](#) | [Newsletter](#) | [About P/P](#) | [About Cliff Crego](#)

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***RIGHT OF THE LINE! biking from Bend to Burns on Hwy. 20***

While biking down straight road to infinity like this one,  
I often remember and recite certain of my Miniatures, like

"A free economy is a strictly limited one.  
Even the busiest of thoroughfares still retains  
a thin white line, protecting the rights of those  
of us who prefer to walk." (or bike, as is here the case...)

## **OUT OF CONTROL**—*the runaway economies of systemic imbalance*

I have argued elsewhere, that all truly free economies are necessarily strictly limited ones. This goes, of course, radically against the prevailing metaphysics that freedom increases with the decrease of regulation. Let's see why.

The model I like to use is that of an essentially self-regulating, self-organizing network of highways. The point I like to make is that systems of roads function as well as they do because they are ordered not on *principles of control*—that is, rules that tell you *what* to do—but rather on *principles of limit*—that is, rules that tell you *what not* to do, like no faster or slower than x.

My contention is that a small set of clear, unambiguous rules or limits is a hallmark of all self-organizing systems. (A rule of thumb—with no play on words intended—is that, if you have more limits than fingers on one hand, something is wrong. One ought always be able to tick off the rules quickly and rhythmically as a test of clarity.) What do I mean by self-organizing? Well, in human terms, the key feature of self-organization is that it requires little or no policing. In other words, the system exhibits natural in-built safeguards against, and correction of, all breaking of limits. I don't want to crash into *you*, and you don't want to crash into *me*, so we naturally both readily accept all such reasonable limits.

Another way of saying the same thing negatively is: a self-organizing system has failed, that is, has demonstrated an inappropriate or ill-designed set of limits, when it is in need of continuous control *by use of force*. The key point I would like to make here, is that this is a systemic problem, and not an ethical one concerning a few individuals of questionable moral character. For example, in my view, current US drug

laws are a textbook illustration of such failure, causing far more suffering and disorder than they eliminate, both on the streets of North American cities and in the developing countries where source plants like poppies and coca are grown. (Even conservative economist Milton Friedman thought this to be the case.) So, excessive use of force by the State in democratic countries is, in the view being sketched here, a plain indication that somewhere in the background of an arcane legal system lurks a poorly conceived, self-defeating labyrinth of unjust laws and self-serving legislation.

So, what would a clear set of self-organizing limits for a free economy look like? In this miniature, I'm not going to answer this question directly. Rather, I'd like to state by way of two examples drawn from current financial headlines what a truly free—and therefore strictly limited—economy would *not* look like.

In 1999, the Clinton administration repealed a key depression era piece of legislation known as the *Glass-Steagall Act*. This act was designed to keep—in other words, to limit—savings and speculative investment banks separate. Repealing the act removed the limits, thus effectively giving government sanction for bankers of all stripes to imprudently throw the dice, so to speak, with the money in our savings accounts.

A second crucial misstep occurred in 2004 when under the Bush administration, then chairperson of Goldman Sachs and now Secretary of the Treasury, Hank Paulson, convinced the Securities and Exchange Commission to lift limits on required investment capital.\* This led to the remarkable situation that, when Bear Stearns went under, they were leveraging, to use an ugly phrase, 33 dollars of debt on every dollar of equity, to use another equally cumbersome expression. In other words, the 1930's depression era saying, "*A dime will get you a dollar*," had become under Secretary Paulson's influence, "*Three cents will get you a dollar!*"

Now, to continue with our analogy of a self-organizing and self-regulating network of highways, the repeal of Glass-Steagall and allowing the savings and investment branches of the banking system to merge, is the roadway equivalent of allowing **NASCAR** to run races freely on the Interstate. And to add insult to injury, the 2004 repeal of capital limits is the equivalent of giving the fastest and most high-powered of those race-cars a loan of essentially free gas (3 cents on the dollar..) The result

has been, as everyone now knows, catastrophic. The collapse, in my view, while not perhaps in all its on-going gory details, but rather in its general outline, was completely predictable. And what is more, it is not the mere result of the greed of 'a few bad apples,' but I would argue of systemic poor design. That is, the utter failure to compose a clear set of unambiguous limits. Again, just as is already universally the case with networks of roads around the world.

My central point, however, does not concern the details of reform that would lead to less corruption and a more equitable distribution of wealth and access to resources, but rather one of basic logical necessity. Most readers are probably already aware, that, in the recent US election cycle, Mr. McCain received about seven million dollars in backing from Wall Street; While Mr. Obama received about 10 million. My contention is that, as long as it is possible to purchase influence in this way, and on this scale, the economy must necessarily be skewed to the expensive racecars of the already reckless hyper-rich, resulting in a continuous cascade of unnecessary and unpredictable pile-ups and crashes. And, if we fail to take heed of this basic difference between, on the one hand, intelligent limit, and on the other, rigid mechanical control or regulation, then we had better prepare ourselves for more self-induced world-wide economic runaways charging headlong into degenerative chaos. As Virgil has it in his arresting image of his Georgics: *"The world is like a chariot run wild, that rounds the course unchecked, and, gaining speed, sweeps the helpless driver onto his doom."*

*Pine Lakes Camp,  
Eagle Cap Wilderness,  
Oregon, X.29.2008*

\* data drawn from an excellent [Democracy Now!](#) interview ([X.17.2008](#)) with **Paul Craig Roberts**, former Assistant Secretary of the Treasury Department in the Reagan administration and a former associate editor of the Wall Street Journal.



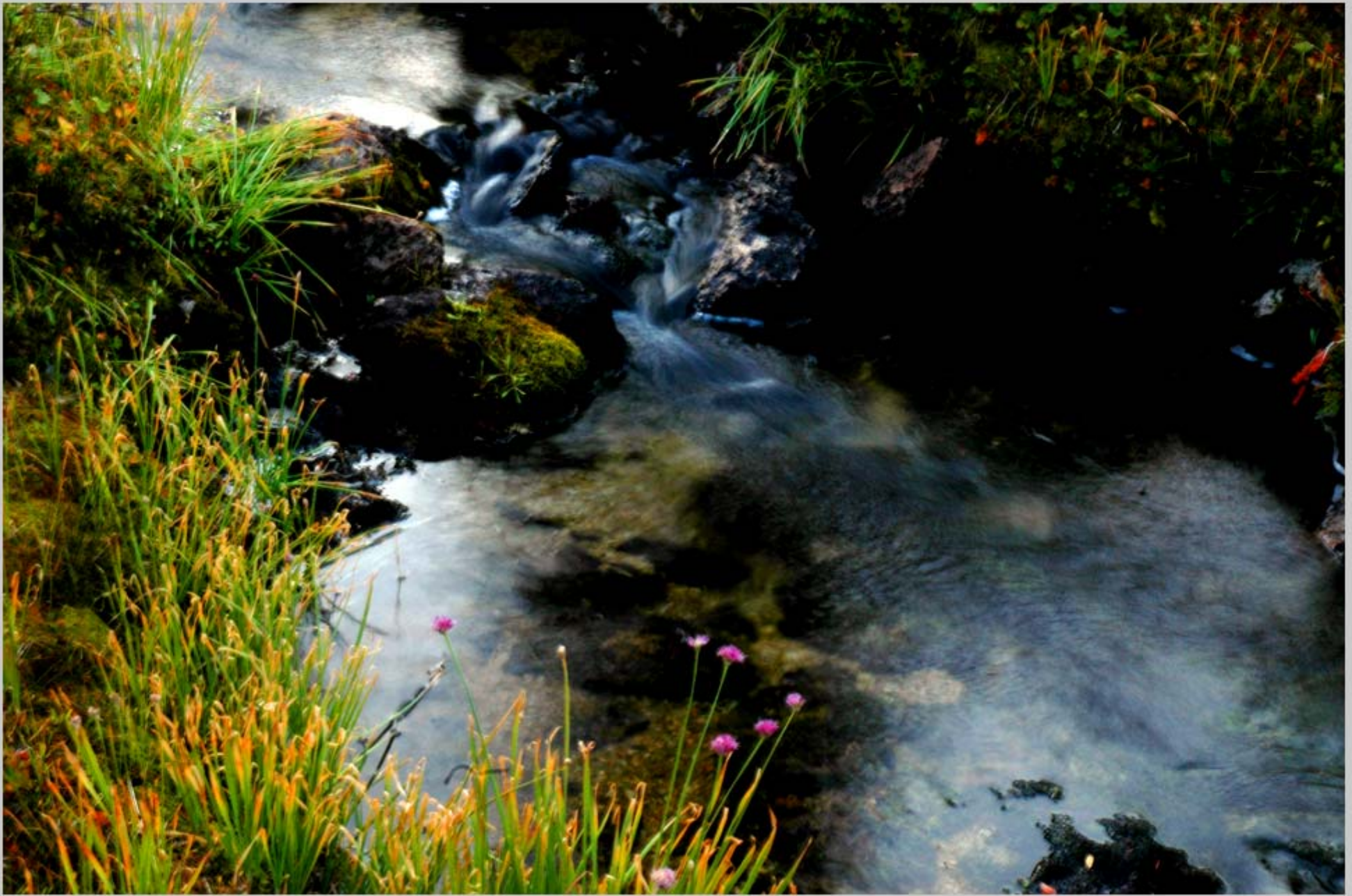


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| [Map](#) | [TOC: I-IV](#) | [TOC: V-VIII](#) | [Image Index](#) | [Index](#) | [Text Only](#) | [Download Page](#) | [Newsletter](#) | [About P/P](#) | [About Cliff Crego](#)

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*Holly Brook, late September, above Hidden Lake, Eagle Cap Wilderness . . .*  
**On the road in the Northwest of America.**

## NIGHT ODE

One bright clear flame,  
hearth-center of my world at night.  
I watch its moods—a  
single white candle—one  
moment a motionless monk  
the next, a fickle young woman  
looking for her lost car keys,  
flickering back and forth  
with the whims of a cool autumn breeze.  
Either way, the candle burns wholly now.  
Not tomorrow, when markets or farms  
may fail,  
or yesterday, when other  
calamities reigned supreme.  
No. The candle burns wholly now,  
centered and silent,  
letting the winds of the world  
and the coming winter

bring what they may.



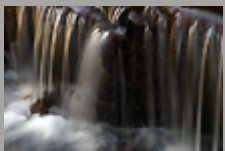
[October Path,](#)  
[\*East Eagle\*](#)



[Lostine /](#)  
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[View Through](#)  
[Barbed-wire](#)



Dipper Falls—  
*whisper veil*



Cusick's  
Speedwell



Eagle Cap—  
*reflections*



Western  
Mountain Heather



Harmonica &  
Fiddle Duo—  
*Ricland Summer Festival*



A Broke Bride  
between Two Brothers





25 Decades of Tree-time &  
WHEN GROWTH IS  
'FALSE COMPARE'

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South/  
North  
Sister  
—  
first  
light



Hut,  
Black  
Butte



Ponderosa  
Pines—  
after burn



Manzanita  
Spring!

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| back to [Picture/Poems: Central Display](#) | go to [P/P Photoweeek: Archive](#) | or go to [last week's](#) PhotoWeek pages |

---

| [Map](#) | [TOC: I-IV](#) | [TOC: V-VIII](#) | [Image Index](#) | [Index](#) | [Text Only](#) | [Download Page](#) | [Newsletter](#) | [About P/P](#) | [About Cliff Crego](#) |

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*October Path, Northend of East Eagle . . . Eagle Cap Wilderness*  
**On the road in the American Northwest.**

## CHILL MOUNTAINS OF THE HEART

Wind out of nowhere,  
Rocks fracturing from high vertical cliffs,  
O Chill mountains of the heart,  
When will I learn the ancient Art  
of stonepine and nutcracker?  
Of making my stash of seeds of hope,  
come good years, and come bad.  
Chill mountains of the heart,  
steep descent into the winding waters of compassion,  
slow steady rise of mist and broken light,  
razor ridge dividing known from unknown,  
and unknown from unknowable,  
Horizon forever retreating as I come near.  
O Sheer signal fire of peace.

*Hummingbird Pass,  
Eagle Cap Wilderness,  
Oregon, X.29.2008*





*Lostine River Valley & Hurricane Ridge, view North from Upper Lake, Eagle Cap Wilderness*  
On the road in the American Northwest.



## **DEATH EXPERIENCE—a poem from the German by *Rainer Maria Rilke***

We know nothing of this going away, that  
shares nothing with us. We have no reason,  
whether astonishment and love or hate,  
to display Death, whom a fantastic mask

of tragic lament astonishingly disfigures.  
Now the world is still full of roles which we play  
as long as we make sure, that, like it or not,  
Death plays, too, although he does not please us.

But when you left, a strip of reality broke  
upon the stage through the very opening  
through which you vanished: Green, true green,  
true sunshine, true forest.

We continue our play. Picking up gestures  
now and then, and anxiously reciting  
that which was difficult to learn; but your far away,  
removed out of our performance existence,

sometimes overcomes us, as an awareness  
descending upon us of this very reality,  
so that for a while we play Life  
rapturously, not thinking of any applause.

*Rainer Maria Rilke (tr. Cliff Crego)*



*View Through Barbed-wire, Oregon landscape . . .*

## On the road in the American Northwest.

### THE ENERGY OF CORRUPTION

We shape the world and the world shapes us.

*"Clean coal"* is like the idea of a healthy, 'low-tar' cigarette;  
*"Safe nuclear"* is like a time-bomb with but a slightly  
longer fuse.

O vested interest, clouding the future with the smoke of  
deliberately deceptive false promises. I say to you, when  
the dust settles on the present dim era of fire and hydro-  
carbons and it is dug out by future archeologists, the central  
ethical question asked will be not why the EXXON's of the  
world lied with such dogged tenacity—that is, after all, only  
human—but rather why the rest of us, privileged as we are  
to live under the hard-won protections of freedom of thought  
and speech, believed their cheap propaganda, and as servile  
citizens of the congregation of the faithful followed their lead  
straight to the inner circles of Hell.

### SIGNS OF EMPIRE

(I)

The second surest sign of the self-corrupting, decadent,  
one-sided power of Empire, is when children grow up  
learning no other culture, no other language, than their  
own. The first, is when teachers of the young know this  
to be true, and couldn't give a damn.

(II)

With the perversion of the sheer brilliance and great promise of the new information technology into the dark and sinister world of systems of surveillance, at a stroke, the meaning of the word, web, flips from "*connected*" into "*gotcha!*"

*Broken Bridge Camp,  
Eagle Cap Wilderness,  
Oregon, X.29.2008*



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*Dipper Falls, whisper veil, Cliff Creek . . . Eagle Cap Wilderness*  
**On the road in the American Northwest.**

*Epiphany* is one of those beautiful words that comes to us from the ancient Greek. It means *to reveal*, in the sense of *sudden insight* or inspiration.

In a way, insight, which for me is an actual movement of energy, or intelligence, is everything. For me, insight is not something personal, but rather *moves*, or is *in resonance with*, but not of, the individual. Insight is what I look for in works of Art. I find it, for example, in Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, as well as in Glenn Gould's performance. I find it in certain seminal addresses of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Or the ideas and style of thinking of Buckminster R. Fuller. Or the brilliance of Benoit Mandelbrot's fractal geometry. And, of course, I find it everywhere in Nature, especially the forms as revealed to the human eye in the *not-too-big* and *not-too-small* dimension of what I think of as the magical middle realm.

It seems to me that present-day Western culture has for the most part turned its back on this energy of insight, and already two or three generations ago has filled the empty space with entertainment. That is why wildness is, and has always been, so important. Because it turns off the entertainment, and turns off this incessant chatter of voices telling us what to believe and think.

Three legendary moments of insight I think every child should learn by heart, and which are especially dear to me, are brought together here in a little set of three 37-step poems. The Greek philosopher, *Pythagorus*, who used and explored the world of sound for much of his model of creation, appears in the poem at the moment he hears a musical octave ringing out on the heavy anvils of a blacksmith's shop and on the spot figures out why. The teacher / student duo—one of the greatest of all time—of *Anne Sullivan* and *Helen Keller* appears in the second at the moment Helen—both deaf and blind—suddenly sees that every thing in the world has a name. This moment has always seemed to me to manifest the very essence of what learning is, and like a lightning bolt out

of nowhere, calls into question mechanistic theories of the mind. And lastly, there's our humble earth-bound reptile as it for the very first time takes to the air on newly discovered feathered wings. I've always felt that this hypothetical evolutionary moment is directly linked to humankind's own great leap, an ephiphany or bold leap of spirit if there ever was one, many eons later all the way to the Moon and back.

\* \* \*

In order for a variation form like this to work, one needs to do them in sets or sequences. Try reading them out-loud to get a sense of how the rhythms and accents change in surprising ways while still keeping to the basic 37-step pattern:

## Epiphanies

(I)

Lover of wisdom,  
Pythagorus hears two anvils  
sound octaves at a blacksmith's shop.

Suddenly,

half of weight is half  
the length of a string—lightly touched.

(II)

*"Wa-ter. Wa-ter. Wa-  
ter."* Thrice the fingers of the teacher  
write in the palm of a girl's hand.

Suddenly,

all things have names, and  
the girl sees more than those who see.

(III)

Strangest of creations,  
a serpent with arms and feathers  
slithers to the edge of its cliff.

Suddenly,

*take-off, thin air! O*  
tracks left in the dust of the moon.

*Thompson Meadow,  
Eagle Cap Wilderness,  
Oregon, X.23.2008*





*Cusick's Speedwell* (*Veronica cusickii*),

Cusick's Speedwell is a member of the *Figwort* family endemic to the Wallowas, named for *William C. Cusick* of Union Oregon, one of the first botanists of the Blue Mountain & Wallowa ranges (1842-1922). The common name 'speedwell' comes to us from the traditional healing properties associated with the genus, such as speeding the healing of wounds. The botanical generic name is as ancient as it is interesting. **Veronica** refers, of course, to *Saint Veronica*, a woman from Jerusalem who is said to have offered her veil to Jesus on the way to the Calvary-hillside of the Crucifixion—to wipe the blood and sweat from his brow. Legend has it that the cloth retained the imprint of the image of Jesus' countenance.

## THE LITERAL MAN & THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF METAPHOR

The world of the literal man—a state of mind and being which manifests now in both genders equally—is a world of extreme fragmentation. In this broken-apart world of the literal man, the natural weave of connectedness, of the interdependencies of wholeness, has been ripped apart, and 'facts' and 'things' exist in all but complete isolation. It is a world, therefore, in which image and metaphor, or rhythm and movement, not only make little sense, but are no longer even possible. And it is a world, because nothing is connected to anything else. ethical responsibility is reduced to the utter indifference of the tightest of circles around the exigencies of his own personal survival.

It may come as little surprise that the literal man makes the perfect foot soldier in the technological armies of mechanistic science that have given us the modern weapons industry. The brilliant physicist who without the slightest ethical qualms diligently increases the yields of a new nuclear device; Or the virtuoso economist who spins the market trends with great short-term success and methematical élan while diligently ignoring every single relevant feature of the wider, long-term context; Or the clever genetic engineer of genius who diligently designs seeds that self-destruct, seeds that you must buy because his goal is to make sure that no others are available, and that terminate in their own infertility.

The final extreme? A world resource empire that hordes the very water of life itself, and which sells it back to us at a price only he, the literal man, can afford. This is the "participate or perish" world of the literal man, which, as posited at the outset, is a state of mind and being which manifests now in both genders equally.

## ***COMPLICATION?***

Complication—in contrast to the richness of natural *complexity*—is about making things at least twice as difficult as necessary, thus making it easy to do really difficult things not at all.

## **BETWEEN THE WORLDS . . .**

All mischief begins with distance. Poet,  
be the messenger between the worlds.

*Broken Bridge Camp,  
Eagle Cap Wilderness,  
Oregon, X.29.2008*



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*Eagle Cap, reflection in Hidden Lake . . . Eagle Cap Wilderness*  
**On the road in the American Northwest.**

## **POOL OF THE MIND**

The mind is like a pool of water  
that reflects many mountains.

Rarely, if ever, do we  
see the mountains directly.

Better to keep the water pure,  
protected, whole.

*Pine Lakes Camp,  
Eagle Cap Wilderness,  
Oregon, X.29.2008*



*Western Mountain Heather (Cassiope mertensiana) VIII.24.08*

*Cassiope* was a favorite genus of the 19-th century conservationist

and lyrical naturalist, John Muir. The extraordinary beauty of its tiny inverted urn-shaped flowers makes it easy to see why.

I can't help thinking of the ancient Greek notion of '*hebe*', the bloom of youth or the very peak of beauty of the young women as she is about to become a bride. Hebe, of course, is also the name of the goddess, daughter of Zeus. Homer speaks of her as the princess who was the divine domestic, a cupbearer to the gods. At a rocky 2200 meters, on a west-facing slope, one can't help bending down on one's knees and exclaiming, "*Good god that's beautiful!*"

## FUNDAMENTALISM

*Fundamentalism*—whether economic, or political, or religious—is always based on the twin principles of Absolute Belief & *Absolute Authority*. That is why fundamentalism is incompatible with democracy, and necessarily eschews all rational debate. And why every house built upon its foundations is necessarily a prison, a prison on the verge of collapse.

## CIRCLE?

Between the larch needle and leaf of the water-lily,  
Nature draws its circle.

## HEROES, PAST & FUTURE

In the past,

war-makers  
were  
immortalized  
in  
the  
great  
epics  
of  
the  
world  
poetic  
tradition  
as  
the  
heroes  
of  
the  
age.

Now  
that  
it  
has  
unquestionably  
become  
a  
question  
of

*non-violence  
or  
non-existence,*

the  
term  
'heroic'  
only



seems  
to  
ring  
true  
for  
the  
future  
*peace-maker,*  
the  
future

*King's,*

*Gandhi's,*

*Einstein's*

and

*Krishnamurti's*

of  
the  
world  
who  
dare  
to  
draw  
a  
still  
wider  
circle  
of  
compassion  
and  
enlightenment  
around  
the

whole.

*Broken Bridge Camp,  
Eagle Cap Wilderness,  
Oregon, X.29.2008*



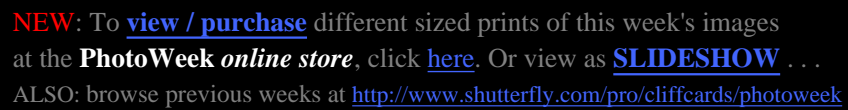
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*Harmonica & Fiddle Duo, Joe Otman and Emma Whitnah  
Richland Summer Festival VII.12.08, Northeast Oregon, U. States . . .*

*Music?* The one thing humans do that makes the rest of Nature jealous.

*Broken Bridge Camp,  
Eagle Cap Wilderness,  
Oregon, X.29.2008*



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[Map](#) | [TOC: I-IV](#) | [TOC: V-VIII](#) | [Image Index](#) | [Index](#) | [Text Only](#) | [Download Page](#) | [Newsletter](#) | [About P/P](#) | [About Cliff Crego](#)

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*Broken Bridge, Pine Creek, South Wallowas, Oregon . . .*  
On the road in the American Northwest.



**A** broken bridge between two brothers,  
 Always sad, never needed,  
 Who will be the first to repair?  
 The one who waits, or the one who doesn't dare?

The water that passes still remembers,  
 When fish returned with gifts from the sea,  
 And hurts and bruises mended easily,  
 In games of war played round the family tree.

Who will be the first to remember?  
 A broken bridge between two brothers,  
 Always sad, and never, never needed.



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| [Map](#) | [TOC: I-IV](#) | [TOC: V-VIII](#) | [Image Index](#) | [Index](#) | [Text Only](#) | [Download Page](#) | [Newsletter](#) | [About P/P](#) | [About Cliff Crego](#)





*Stonepine Timeline (Whitebark Pine, *Pinus albicaulus*), Eagle Cap Wilderness*  
On the road in the American Northwest.



## WHEN GROWTH IS '*FALSE COMPARE*'

We shape the world and the world shapes us.

*"What grows is good.  
And if something is good,  
it is good to want more of it..."*

O Irony of ironies! Behind the intellectual facade of economic growth lies the harsh, hidden reality of a very real natural *anti*-growth. Anti-growth is the wholesale destruction, either by means of over-use or contamination or both, of the shared vital resources of the world community such as air, water, forests and soil. Anti-growth is not just an unfortunate side-effect; it is an absolute necessity needed to fire the engines—and that is the ironic twist here—that sustain the illusion projected by what in essence is a false analogy.

Let me start over again:

As every poet knows, there's nothing worse than, to use Shakespeare's phrase, '*false compare*.'

Language shapes perception. And perception shapes action. Analogy, or the *this-is-like-that* of thought, is finding similarity in difference, a common feature in seemingly different patterns of movement.

For example, we say: "*Forests grow*." And by analogy, we say: "*Economies grow*." We all know that forests actually grow, whereas the transference of growth as a property to describe patterns of change in economies is an entirely different matter. This may be more or less true, or it may be false.

My contention is that it is false.

But let's consider natural growth for a moment.

As we all know, from the human perspective, growth is more often than not a slow, steady process. So slow in fact that we normally can't see it. That is why time-lapse

photography of a flower bud unfolding, or a glacier retreating, is so revealing. Natural growth is frequently measured in areas of space so small, and spans of time so long, that it lies beyond the grasp of both our normal sense of proportion and perception. For example, lichen grow about 1 centimeter a century; Or the humus layer of soil around treeline increases its depth 10 times slower yet: about a centimeter every thousand years. That's about 30 human generations for every finger-width of soil stable enough to support the alpine grasses under your boots!

A second key point is that natural growth is normally cyclical. And it is cyclical in a highly rhythmic way. As everywhere in Nature, there are limits. And because there are limits, there is balance. In other words: without limits, there can be no balance; as well as the inverse: if there is imbalance, limits have somehow broken down. So natural growth is not normally simply a matter of endless linear expansion, and especially not the species of expansion known as *exponential increase*, as I've argued elsewhere. Increase or expansion in Nature is always balanced by a complementary and equally essential movement of contraction, decline and, ultimately, death. Nowhere do we see this from the human perspective more clearly than the life of the soil, to which we all know that we too shall return some day, and which depends on this continuous composting and transformation of dead and dying organisms for its sustained vitality.

Now let's return briefly to the false analogy.

When politicians or theorists speak of economic growth, they do not have in mind anything remotely similar to the .01 mill growth rate of the mountain soils mentioned above. They are really thinking of largely unnatural systems of linear expansion—a kind of always 'gitting bigger' stretching onto without limit to infinity—as well as the notorious expansion-of-expansion of compound interest. Who would not, after all. If you are focused on dollars or euro amounts, a change or expansion rate of just 5% compound interest will more than double your money in just 16 years! But how long can this unlimited interest-on-top-of-interest continue before it collapses, as it must? In contrast, natural growth is by definition always limited and self-sustaining. And, as suggested above, in a vicious inversion of meaning, that the real growth of the natural world, like that of the stonepine pictured above or the forest in which it grew, will be razed to the ground in order to sustain the illusion. In my opinion,

this is actually the case.

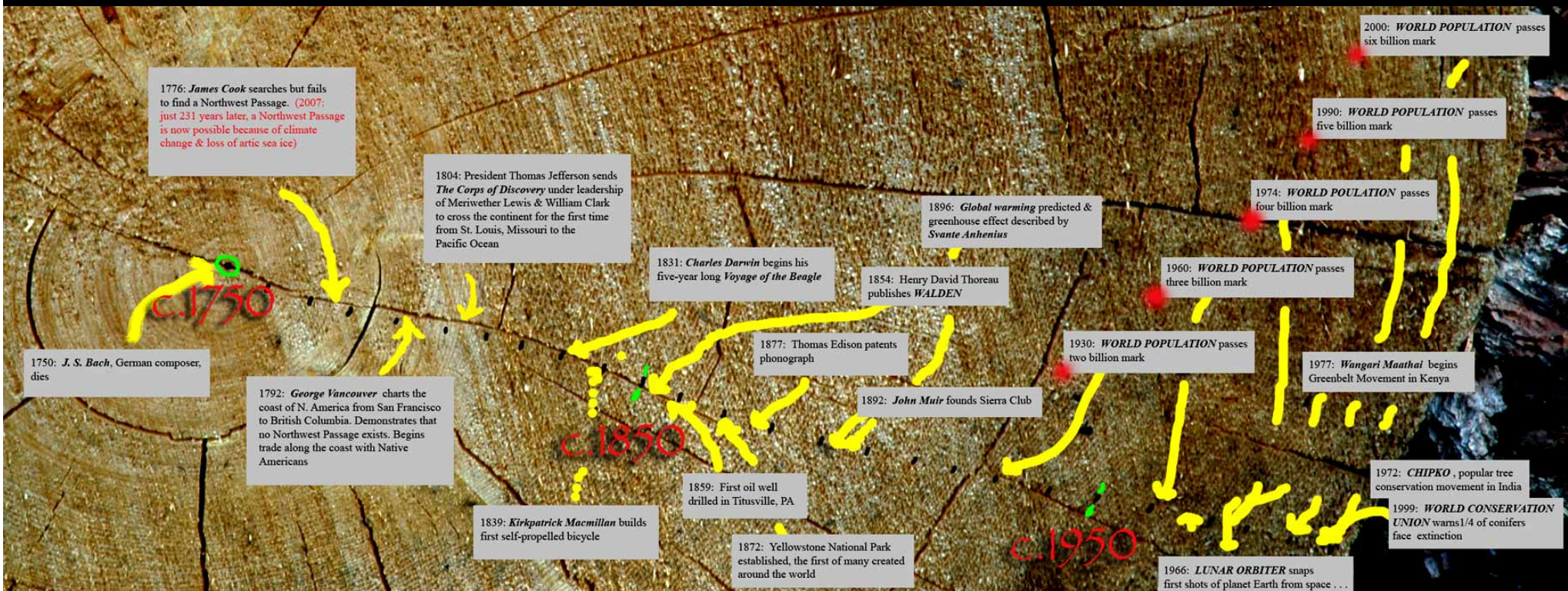
And so we come full circle to the dead-end of the speculative mind, so at odds with the forester's, or farmer's, or rancher's point of view. It is a confused and confusing notion of growth which rests on the hope and downfall of every gambler:— that each toss of the dice will result in the impossibility of a straight series of wins going on without end.

A shaky notion of growth and 'false compare,' indeed!

*Broken Bridge Camp,  
Eagle Cap Wilderness,  
Oregon, X.29.2008*

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Stonepine Timeline (Whitebark Pine, *Pinus albicaulus*), Eagle Cap Wilderness  
On the road in the American Northwest.



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| Map | [TOC: I-IV](#) | [TOC: V-VIII](#) | [Image Index](#) | [Index](#) | [Text Only](#) | [Download Page](#) | [Newsletter](#) | [About P/P](#) | [About Cliff Crego](#)

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