

ALWAYS COMING HOME

brought with them a basin of eucalyptus oil, and they held Dira down and pushed his head into the oil, and held it there a long time. A long time he struggled and did not die, but they kept holding his head under the oil, and at last his great, wide, fat body stiffened and began to shrink. It shrank and shrank, and the wife and her mother and child sat up. It shrank more, and they stood up. It shrank down no larger than a fist, and they could speak again. It shrank down no larger than a walnut, and they could move freely and say what had happened. It shrank no larger than a thumbnail, flat and dry and dark, and the people, greeting and comforting the wife and her family, didn't keep careful watch on it. It shrank down to something not as big as a lentil, and then scrambled out of the basin of oil, and out the door, back into the hills, to wait somewhere for another person to come by. It's still waiting there, they say.

POEMS

FIRST SECTION

AS EXPLAINED IN "Spoken and Written Literature" in The Back of the Book, some Valley poetry was written down and some was not, but whether improvised, recited from memory, or read from writing, it was always performed aloud.

This section includes several improvisations, some well-known songs, which like all folksongs have lost authorship and belong to everybody (not all poetry in the Valley did; some of it was given, and some of it had to be earned), some children's songs, and a few "public" pieces—poems spoken in contest or written up in public places.

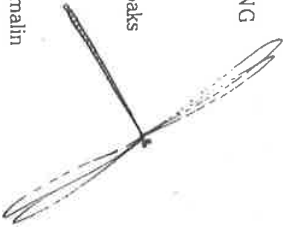


A SHEPHERD'S SONG FROM CHUMO

You can have the afterbirth,
not the lamb, Coyote.
The ewe has sharp hooves,
better look out, Coyote.
I can have some girls,
not that one, Coyote.
Her mother doesn't like me,
better look out, Coyote.

DRAGONFLY SONG

Ounmainl, Ounmainl!
 Beautiful on the River!
 To the barns under the dark oaks
 the cattle return at evening.
 The sound of their cowbells
 is like the ringing of water.
 From the round hill over Ounmainl
 one can see all the vineyards,
 and hear the people singing,
 coming from the vineyards home at evening.



NOTE: A dragonfly song or poem means an improvisation, something that goes by lightly. This was spoken by Broom to a family group on a balcony of a house in Ounmainl on a summer evening, and when I said I liked it the author wrote it down and gave it to me.

A BAY LAUREL SONG

He has to wave it,
 he has to wave it like a flag
 to make it stand up.
 He has to stick it into mouseholes,
 he has to stick it into moleholes,
 he has to stick it into assholes
 to make it stand up.
 Let me lie down, it says.
 No, he says.
 Let me get some sleep, it says.
 Get up, he says.
 So it gets up and grows hands
 and gets a knife and cuts him off.

He goes running off without one,
 and it sings heya nine times and lies down
 and goes to sleep.

He grows a new one
 but it's very little.
 He has to lie down
 and stick it into antholes.

SOME "FIVE/FOUR" POEMS FROM MADIDINOU
Spoken at a poetry session on the riverbank after work.

LOSS

My heart is heavy.
 It lies down crossways,
 stopping my breathing,
 a stone of grieving.

JEALOUSY

That one with earrings,
 what can she give you?
 More wine? More mutton?
 Bigger erections?

FIRST LOVE

Weeding tomatoes,
 the vines smell bitter
 in the hot sunlight.
 A long time ago.

THE DARK GIRL

Blackwinged butterfly
 turns, flits, returns
 to the yarrow stem,
 intent, uncertain.





A FLYTING SERIES

The old word flyting, a contest of insults in rhyme, translates the Kesh word fmi. The following were oral improvisations at a Wine Dance in Chumo.

You come from down the Valley.

I can tell by the way the words come out of your mouth like crayfish getting dragged out of a hole backwards.

People keep a lot of chickens up in Chumo.

The chickens are so clever they talk like people:

Rock, rock, rock, rock, rock, rock, rockbasket!

The people in Chumo are as clever as the chickens.

Down the Valley the intelligence of the inhabitants is manifested in their custom of brewing small beer from dog turds.

Great minds prefer strong flavors. In Chumo they like strong beer, so they use cat turds.

I can tell you come from down the Valley by the way you drag one idea around all morning like a bitch clamped onto the dog's penis.

There was a man in Chumo
had an idea, once,
for a few minutes.

FERNSTEM'S SONG
Sung at work by Fernstem of Kasioh-na.

Old feet
sticking out in front
of old knees,
old eyes see you
over this basket
old hands are making,
this new basket.
Old feet,
you walked a long way
to get here
in front of this basket.
Stick up in the air there,
keep on telling
this new song
to this old singing woman.

A POEM SAID WITH THE DRUM
By Kulkurna of Chuukumas.

The hawk turns crying, gyring.
There is a tick stuck in my scalp.
If I soar with the hawk
I have to suck with the tick.
O hills of my Valley, you are too complicated!



ARTISTS

*Written on a white plaster wall in the workroom of the
Oak Society in Telma-na.*

What do they do,
the singers, tale-writers, dancers, painters, shapers, makers?
They go there with empty hands,
into the gap between.
They come back with things in their hands.
They go silent and come back with words, with tunes.
They go into confusion and come back with patterns.
They go limping and weeping, ugly and frightened,
and come back with the wings of the redwing hawk,
the eyes of the mountain lion.

That is where they live,
where they get their breath:
there, in the gap between,
the empty place.

Where do the mysterious artists live?
There, in the gap between.
Their hands are the hinge.
No one else can breathe there.
They are beyond praise.

The ordinary artists
use patience, passion, skill, work
and returning to work, judgment,
proportion, intellect, purpose,
indifference, obstinacy, delight in tools,
delight, and with these as their way
they approach the gap, the hub,
approaching in circles, in gyres,
like the buzzard, looking down, watching,
like the coyote, watching.



They look to the center,
they turn on the center,
they describe the center,
though they cannot live there.
They deserve praise.

There are people who call themselves artists
who compete with each other for praise.
They think the center
is a stuffed gut,
and that shitting is working.
They are what the buzzard and the coyote
ate for breakfast yesterday.

A VAUNTING
From the town of Tachas Touchas.

The musicians of Tachas Touchas
make flutes of the rivers, make drums of the hills.
The stars come out to listen to them.
People open the doors of the Four Houses,
they open the windows of rainbow,
to listen to the musicians of Tachas Touchas.

A RESPONSE
From the town of Madidinou.

The musicians of Tachas Touchas
make flutes of their noses, make drums of their buttocks.
The fleas run away from them.
People shut the doors in Madidinou,
they shut the windows in Sinshan,
when they hear the musicians of Tachas Touchas coming.

AN EXHORTATION FROM THE SECOND AND

THIRD HOUSES OF THE EARTH

*A calligraphed poster-scroll from the Serpentine
heyimas of Wakucha.*

Listen, you people of the Adobes, you people of the Obsidian!
Listen, you gardeners and farmers, orcharders and vintners,
shepherds and drovers!

Your arts are admirable and generous, arts of plenty and
increase, and they are dangerous.

Among the tasselled corn the man says, this is my plowing
and sowing, this is my land.

Among the grazing sheep the woman says, these are my
breeding and caring, these are my sheep.

In the furrow the seed sprouts hunger.
In the fenced pasture the cow calves fear.

The granary is heaped full with poverty.
The foal of the bridled mare is anger.

The fruit of the olive is war.
Take care, you Adobe people, you Obsidian people, and come
over onto the wild side,

don't stay all the time on the farming side; it's dangerous to
live there.

Come among the unsown grasses bearing richly, the oaks
heavy with acorns, the sweet roots in
unplowed earth.

Come among the deer on the hill, the fish in the river, the
quail in the meadows.

You can take them, you can eat them,
like you take them, you can eat them.

They are with you, not for you.
Who are their owners?

This is the puna's range,
this hill is the vixen's,

this is the owl's tree,
this is the mouse's run,

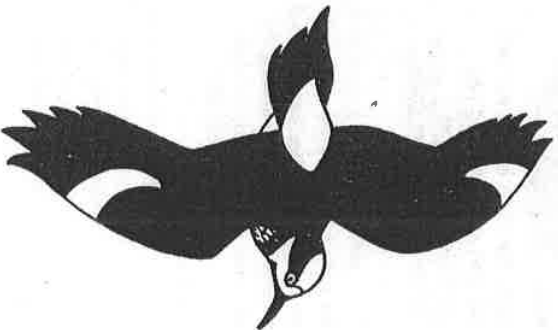
this is the minnow's pool:
it is all one place.

Come take your place.

No fences here, but sanctions.
No war here, but dying; there is dying here.
Come hunt, it is yourself you hunt.
Come gather yourself from the grass, the branch, the earth.
Walk here, sleep well, on the ground that is not yours, but is
yourself.

BOSO
(THE ACORN WOODPECKER)
A children's counting-out song in Sinshan.

Boso-bird, red-hat, blacka blacka white-streak,
whackawhackawhacka on a oaktree,
walka walka backward on a joketree,
yackayackayacka goes a boso!
Yackawhacka, yackawhacka, one two three,
yackawhacka, yackawhacka, out goes he.



ALL IN THE WESTERN LAND

A children's dance song, heard in all nine towns of the Valley; the dance is called Making the Gyre. Rhyme is characteristic of children's songs; the meter of the translation attempts to suggest the insistent rhythm of the dance.

CHORUS

Circle around around the house
circle around and back
everything burning burning
everything burning black

SOLO

O who will break the circle
O who will loose my hand
O who will be my lover
all in the western land

CHORUS

Open the circle around and out
and part and swing and pass
down along the valleys
and the yellow hills of grass

SOLO

So make and break the circle
so take and loose my hand
so love and leave me dancing
all in the western land



FIVES ABOUT LIZARDS

Improvvised by Giver Ite's daughter of Sinshan while sitting in the sun near a rock wall.

Big lizard pumps up
and down, up, down, up,
shows his blue belly:
I'm sky! I'm lightning!
Little one scuttles:
I'm shadows. I'm not.



TO THE BULLOCK ROSEROOT

An improvisation spoken during the Second Day of the World ceremonies by Kulkuna of Chukulmas.

What's the thought you think
all your life long?
It must be a great one,
a solemn one, to make you gaze
through the world at it,
all your life long.
When you have to look aside from it
your eyes roll, you bellow
in anger, anxious
to return to it, steadily
to gaze at it, think it
all your life long.

THE BUZZARDS

*Sung to the drum by Fox's Gift of Sinshan.
The meter is "four/fives."*

Four buzzards, four!
Four buzzards, four, five!

They turn gyring,
return gyring.

High up, the buzzards
circling turn circling
on the center.

Where is the center?

This hill, that hill,
any valley

where a death is.
There is the center.

Under the circles

inside the gyre
of nine buzzards,
the center is there.

TO THE VALLEY QUAIL

Spoken by Adsevin of Sinshan and her mother's sister, Flowering.

Mother Utkurkur, show me your household,
please let me see it.

The floor is of blue clay,
the walls of rain falling,
the doors are of cloud,
wind is the windows,
you know there is no ceiling.

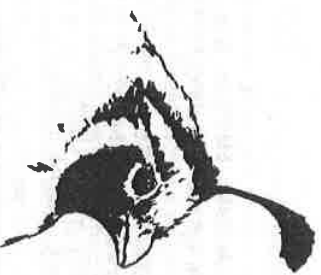
Sister Ekwertwe, how do you keep house,
please tell me or show me.



By running directly and neatly,
and flying up loudly not very far,
by staying together and talking,
by delicate accurate markings,
by plumpness, round eyes, and a topknot.

Daughter Hegurka, what is the end of it,
please let me know it.

The hawk in the hot noon,
the horned owl in twilight,
the cat in the darkness:
feathers, bones, rain falling, sunlight,
hidden under warm wings, round eggs.



TEASING THE KITTEN

*Improvised by He Is Thinking, a boy of about
sixteen, in Sinshan, in the vegetable garden.*

Ho ya, little piece-of-the-ground cat!
Ho ya, little color-of-the-ground cat!
You are holding the dirt down,
sound asleep in the sunlight,
on top of your own shadow.

If I toss this pebble
cat and shadow will come apart—
Ha ya, little fly-in-the-air cat!

ALWAYS COMING HOME

BUCKET

*Improvised on a warm morning of early spring by fifteen-year-old
Adseuin (Morning Star) of Sinshan, while cutting bamboo.*

I feel so dreamy
dreamy lazy, crazy sleepy
like I want to be there
in the doorway, the doorway
or the porch corner
be sitting, be empty
not doing not going
an old bucket left there
in the porch corner is like I am
an old empty bucket somebody left there.

A LOVE SONG

Sung all over the Valley.

If the yellow wind will blow
southeasterly, southeast,
if the pollen wind will blow,
maybe he'll come this morning.

If the sweet-smelling wind will blow
southeasterly, southeast,
if the broom-flower wind will blow,
maybe he'll come this evening.

How to Die in the Valley



FUNERALS TOOK PLACE in the large area of wild hill and forest alongside each town, "the hunting side," where no planting was done and ownership of seed-meadows, cattail marshes, and gathering trees was either communal or a matter of use and usage only. Somewhere within a mile or so of the town each of the Five Houses used a certain region of hilltop or high valley as a graveyard. There were no boundaries, and a family could place a new grave where it liked; the graveyard area was identified by the plantings of apple, manzanita, buckeye, wild azalea, foxglove, and California poppy. The graves were never marked with stones aboveground, but sometimes with a small carved figure of redwood or cedar, and often were planted with one or more of the plants named above, which were looked after as long as survivors and descendants cared to keep the memory green. Most graveyards looked like apple orchards, only even more straggling and irregular than the usual Valley orchard.

The burning ground was in a vale or hollow near and below the graveyard. The fairly large circular ground was cleared of all grass and stamped down and sown with salt yearly by the Black Adobe Lodge members.

The ceremony of dying was called Going Westward to the Sunrise. The following description was given in writing by Mica of Acorn House of Sinshan.



GOING WESTWARD TO THE SUNRISE: INSTRUCTIONS FOR DYING.

Somebody in the Black Adobe Lodge would be the teacher of this knowledge.

After the Wine Dance and before the Grass, people who want to learn the songs of Going Westward to the Sunrise would ask that teacher to instruct them.

After the Wine Dance, they help the teacher build a heyya lodge outside the town, usually on the hunting side, sometimes on the planting side. We in the hill towns build with eucalyptus or willow poles, nine or twelve to the side, tied to the ridgepole with withies, and weave the walls of fir boughs. On the Valley floor, where the lodge may have to be bigger because there are more people, they leave the walls open but make a thick roof, since the rainy season is beginning and some of the celebrants are ill or old, needing shelter. Whether there are walls or not, the entrance is on the northeast side and the exit on the southwest. Dead manzanita wood and apple prunings are gathered and stacked for the fire. All the stones on the ground within the walls of the lodge are gathered together and are heyya. The lodge is named Rejoining.

The teacher goes there on the last night of the Grass and spends the night there, digging a fireplace in the earth, without stones around it, and singing to bless the lodge.

The learners come in the morning. They build and light a fire in the firepit, and throw bay laurel leaves on it, and sing heyya.

If people want to talk then about dying their own death, or to talk about a person close to their heart who had died suddenly or who was ill and dying, they would put a handful of bay leaves on the fire, and talk. The teachers and the others listen. When they



How to Die in the Valley

finish talking, the teacher might speak about things dreamed or learned in vision about the way people may go when they die, or read from the Black Adobe books of poems that speak of the soul, or say nothing but beat heyya on the one-note drum.

Then the teaching would begin. They are to learn the songs to sing while dying and the songs to sing for the dying.

The teacher sings the first song to sing for the dying.

That song will be sung when dying begins. It may be sung for a short time or a long time. The person dying may be able to sing with the watchers then, singing aloud or silently while going into death. The others, the watchers, keep watching and listening as they sing. When it is time to sing the second song for the dying they will know, because the person dying has become still, or the breath is trying to get free. When the pulse and breath have ceased, the third song is begun. When the face is cold, it is ceased.

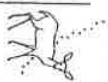
The teacher tells these things between singing the songs, and teaches also that any of the watchers' songs may be sung again and again until the dying is over. The fourth and fifth songs are to be sung first at the burial, and aloud thereafter at any time or place for four days, and aloud at the grave after that for five days, and after that only in silence, in the mind, until the next World Dance. After that they should not be sung for that person.

Most people have heard the watchers' songs sung, the songs for the dying, but have not heard the songs the dying person sings.

The teacher will tell them that the people dying know when to sing the songs by the Places their spirit comes to as they die. At first the mind will know these places, later the soul will know them. If they have lived mindfully, they will recognize these places, whether they are in the Five Houses or the Four Houses. It is well if they can sing all the way to the last song, but there is no need for it. What is needful is that the watchers' songs be sung during the dying, if possible, and for the first nine days of the death, to help the dying to die and the living to live.

When this has been said and discussed, the teacher will sing the first line of the first song of the person dying. The learners will answer singing the first line of the first song of the watchers. So they will learn all the five songs that they will sing when they die, never singing them aloud, but answering them antiphonally with the watchers' songs. Only the teacher, who belongs to the Black Adobe Lodge, sings the songs of the dying person aloud. It is well for the learner to sing them many times in silence, then and later, so that they will be part of the mind and soul.

These are the songs of Going Westward to the Sunrise. [They may be read apart or together, reading down the page or across it.]



ALWAYS COMING HOME

THE SONGS

THE FIRST SONG

The one dying sings:

I will go forward.
It is hard, it is hard.
I will go forward.

The watchers sing:

Go forward. Go forward.
We are with you.
We are beside you.

THE SECOND SONG

I will go forward.
It is changing.
I will go forward.

Go on now, go ahead.
Leave us now.
It is time to leave us.

THE THIRD SONG

There is a way.
There is surely a way.
There is a road, there is a way.
You are going on.
Your feet are on that road.
You are going on that road.

THE FOURTH SONG

The singing is changing.
The light is changing.
The singing is changing.
The light is changing.
They are coming.
They are dancing in shining.
Rejoining.
Do not look back.
You are entering.
You are achieving.
You are arriving.
The light is growing.
Back here is darkness.
Look forward.

THE FIFTH SONG

The doors of the Four Houses
are open.
Surely they are open.
The doors of the Four Houses
are open.
Surely they are open.

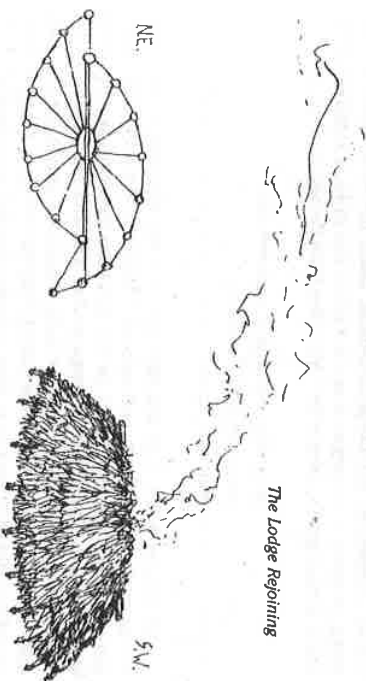
When all the songs have been learned, they cover the fire with earth, filling in the firepit, and while doing that they sing this song:

It is hard, it is hard.
It is not easy.
You must go back in.

How to Die in the Valley

They would take down the Lodge Rejoining after that. They might take a pebble from the heap or a twig of evergreen from the roof to hang their knowledge on. They would go to bathe, and go home. The teacher would go to a wild spring to wash, or if a Blue Clay person, to the heyimas for ablation.

This is how the way of dying is taught by people of the Black Adobe Lodge in the Valley of the Na. I have been learner twice and teacher seven times.



If nobody among the family and friends of the dead had learned the watchers' songs, a member of the Black Adobe Lodge came to sing them, at the deathbed if possible, and at the graveside; and in fact there was always a Black Adobe person in attendance to help out and officiate during a death and funeral.

If there was any doubt or anxiety, a member of the Doctors Lodge certified death. Soon, always within that day and night, the dead person was carried on a covered litter to the burning ground of their House. Family and mourners were the bearers. Wood might be given and carried to the burning ground by mourners, but only Black Adobe Lodge members stayed at the cremation. Family and mourners were directed to go home.

An old sad song in the Valley hints at this:

I watch the smoke behind the ridge,
the smoke rising and the rain falling.

Cremation was the rule, but a good many circumstances might prevent it: very wet weather in the rainy season; very dry weather in the



dry season when the danger of forest fire disallowed the building of any open fire; and the expressed desire of the person to be buried not cremated after death. In these cases a Black Adobe group dug the grave and laid the dead person in it, wrapped in cotton sheeting, on the left side with the limbs somewhat flexed. Then they watched beside the pyre or the open grave for one night, singing the Going Westward songs at intervals.

In the morning all who wished to came to attend the burial. Close kinfolk, assisted by the Lodge members, made the small grave for the ashes, or filled in the grave. When the grave was filled, a member of the Black Adobe spoke, once only, aloud, the Nine Words:

Unceasing, unending, unobstructed,
open, ongoing, incoming,
ever, ever, ever.

A wisp of ashes or of the dead person's hair was cast upward into the air as the Nine Words were spoken. Children at the funeral might be given seeds or grain to scatter on the grave, so that birds would gather there to carry the mourners' songs to the Four Houses. Anybody who wanted to could remain, or come back at intervals during the first four days after the death, to sing the Going Westward songs at the graveside; and during the five days after that, a family member or a mourner from the dead person's House came at least once in the day to sing the Going Westward songs. On the ninth day, traditionally, the mourners regathered to mark the grave with a tree or shrub or flowers, and sing aloud for the last time. After that no formal mourning took place, nor were the songs to be sung aloud for that person.

When somebody died outside the Valley, the companions would make every effort to cremate the body and bring home the ashes, or at least some locks of hair and pieces of clothing, which would then be buried, and the songs sung. If someone was lost or drowned at sea (a most unlikely event) so that there was "no death to carry," a relation would ask the Black Adobe Lodge to set a day for mourning, and the songs of the watchers would be sung daily for nine days at the dead person's heyimas.

Although anyone might come to the burial ceremony, all these ceremonies were essentially private, observed by the close family and friends of the dead, and by Black Adobe assistants. There was no public mourning for any death until the World Dance at the equinox of spring. As described in the section on that dance, the First Night of the World was a community ceremony of mourning and remembrance for all who had died in that town during the year. The long night ceremony of



Burning the Names was a fearfully intense, overcharged excitation and release of emotion. It was dreaded by many of the participants, people trained to value serenity and honor equanimity, and required on this one night to share without shame or reserve the pent-up grief, terror, and anger that death leaves the living to endure. It was a more intensely participatory and abreactive ceremony even than the Moon and the Wine, with all their emotional license and reversals. It expressed as did no other Valley ceremony the emotional and social interdependence of the community, their profound sense of living and dying with one another.

The Fourth Day of the World wakwa, which are intellectually closely connected with mourning rites, are described in the section on the World Dance.



Valley beliefs and theories concerning the soul were of a most amazing complexity, and imperturbably self-contradictory. One might as well try to pin Valley people down to one creation myth as to get a coherent description of the soul out of them. This multiplicity, of course, was in no sense of the word accidental. It was of the essence.

A fairly esoteric approach to the soul is represented in this book by the written piece "The Black Beetle Soul", an expression of a more popular body of belief or thought is the poem "The Inland Sea." The Valley theory of reincarnation or metempsychosis may be unsystematic, but it is lively.

Specifically connected with funeral and mourning rites was a body of popular theory and superstition concerning various kinds of soul involved in the different stages of the funeral. When the *breath-soul* escapes, at death, other souls are "caught in the death" (the corpse) and must be released. If not released, they may linger around the grave or the places where the dead person lived and worked, causing both mental and material trouble—*anxiety*, illness, apparitions. The *earth-soul* is released by cremation and ash-burial or burial of the body; the *eye-soul* is set free when the bit of ash or lock of hair is cast into the wind; and finally the *kin-soul* is released only by the casting of the names into the fire at the World Dance ceremony of general mourning.

In the case, not very common in the Valley, of a death abroad or a disappearance, when "there is no death," no body, only the *kin-soul* can be ritually released. As mentioned, some possessions of the dead person may be brought home and buried in the graveyard, "so that there's a place in the earth for the souls to come to," and the Going Westward songs may be sung in the heyimas, but a feeling of discomfort and incompleteness remains, expressed in the conviction that the other souls will come back to haunt or simply to confirm the lost person's death and

ALWAYS COMING HOME

take leave of the survivors. The breath-soul is invisible, a voice in the night or twilight in lonely places in the hills. The earth-soul might return as an apparition of the person as they were when they died, or after death, and this ghost is feared by people who hold the belief. The eye-soul is benign, sensed only as a presence, yearning or blessing or saying farewell, "going by on the wind's road." Certain Eighth House invocations are addressed to this soul, or to all souls who are thought of as sometimes returning to the Valley on the wind.

O mothers of my mother,
let this wind bear blessing!

For Kesh who leave the Valley, mostly members of the Finders Lodge, the fear of dying outside the Valley, not being buried in Valley ground, is real. The Kesh sense of community, of continuity with the dirt, water, air, and living creatures of the Valley determines them to overcome any ordeals in order to get home to die: the idea of dying and being buried in foreign lands is black despair. There was a story told about a group of Finders exploring down the Outer Coast, who got into a chemically poisoned area; four of the group died. The four survivors mummified their companions' bodies, with the aid of the bone-dry desert climate of the South Coast, and so were able to carry them home for burial—four alive carrying four dead for a month's journey. The feat was spoken of with sympathy, but not with admiration; it was a bit excessive, a bit too heroic, for Valley approbation.



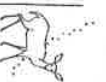
The deaths of animals must be included in any account of Valley funerary practices.

Domestic animals killed for food were addressed before or during the act of killing by any member of the Blood Lodge—any adult or adolescent woman. She said to the animal:

Your life ends now,
your death begins.
Beautiful one,
give us our need.
We give you our words.

The formula was gabbled without the least feeling or understanding, often, but it was never omitted, even by a housewife wringing the neck

How to Die in the Valley



of a chicken. No animal was killed for use unless a woman was present to speak the death-words.

In Wakwaha and Chukulmas, and by some in other towns, a handful of the blood of a slaughtered animal was mixed with red or black earth and made into a little ball, which was kept in the Blood Lodge rooms of the Obsidian heyimas; these balls were used in making adobe bricks for repairs or new constructions.

Whatever parts of a butchered animal, domestic or wild, were not prepared for food or other uses were promptly buried by members of the Tanners Art, usually in a fallow field on the planting side of town. It was customary to set out some bits or bones on a hilltop on the hunting side, "for Coyote and Buzzard," when a big animal was butchered.

Wild animals hunted had each their song, taught by the Hunters Lodge. The hunter sang or talked to the animal he was hunting, silently while the hunt was on, aloud at or after the kill. The songs varied widely from town to town, and there were hundreds of them. Some of the fish invocations are rather curious.

TROUT SONG FROM CHUMO

A shadow.
A dry shadow.
Pay no attention.
Be praised.

FISHING SONG FROM CHUKULMAS

Shuyalal
Come find hands!
Come find tongue!
Come find eyelids!
Come find feet!

DEER HUNTING SONG FROM CHUKULMAS

This way you must come,
delicately walking.
I name you Giver.



ALWAYS COMING HOME

A very old deer hunting song from Madidinou is related to the butchers' formula:

Deerness manifests a death.
My word is grateful.

(*Deerness* is the noun *deer* in the Sky Mode.)

BEAR HUNTING SONG FROM TACHAS TOUCHAS

Whana wa, a, a.
The heart is there.
Eat my fear.
Whana wa, a, a, a.
It must be done.
You must come in.
You must be sorry.

Bears were killed only when they posed a threat to livestock or people; the meat was disliked, and not usually brought in to town, though hunters on extended trips might eat bear. "You," in this song, is in the particular form, not the generic. The hunter is not hunting "bearness," any bear, but is after a particular bear, who has made trouble for the hunter, and for bears in general, and who therefore ought to be sorry.

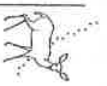
BEAR'S DEATH SONG FROM SINSHAN

Rain darken earth,
blessing falling
from the Sixth House,
heart's blood falling!

The bear was the sign of the Sixth House, the House of Rain and Death. The old man who sang this song said, "Nobody in this town has killed any bear since Grandmother Mountain erupted last. That is a good hunter's song, though. Even when a child hunts a wood rat he ought to sing that song. The bear is there."

According to the theory of the four souls, animals possessed all four kinds, but the system got very vague when extended to plants. All wild birds were considered, essentially, to be souls. The kin-soul of an animal was its generic aspect: deerness, not that deer; cowness, not this cow. The apparent confusions and evasions of the Valley idea of reincarnation or transmigration of souls begin to clarify here: this cow that I now kill

How to Die in the Valley



for food is cowness giving itself to me as food because it has been properly treated and entreated, and again it will give itself to me as a cow, at my need and entreaty; and I that kill this cow am a name, a word, an instance of humanness and—with the cow—of being in general: a moment in a place: a relationship.

Named domestic animals, pets, were believed by the superstitious to return as eye-souls or breath-souls, and sometimes as earth-souls, giving rise to animal ghost stories. A well-known Grey Horse Ghost haunted a canyon in the rough hills behind Chukulmas. Earth-souls of ewes who died in lambing were troublesome in the fog in the fields of Ounualin.

Ghost stories of a moralistic nature involve hunters who hunted on the "planting side," or who failed in courtesy or respect towards the animal they hunted, or who killed immoderately, without need. The latter kind of story, often told at Bay Laurel Lodge campfires, relates how a hunter is terrified, abased, and perhaps hurt or killed by a manifestation of the generic animal, The Deer, The Wild Swan, supernatural in size, beauty, and power. In stories of hunters who omitted the rites of the killer, who "did not speak to the death," a ghost of the particular animal he killed comes to lead the hunter astray in an endless hunt and into madness, accompanying him constantly, visible to him but to no one else. There was a man spoken of in Chukulmas who was apparently an actual instance of this kind of guilt-haunting. He was not an ordinary "forest-living person" or solitary, but lived without shelter, fled at the sight of human beings, and never spoke. He had been a young man named Young Moon of the Obsidian. What his transgression was, nobody knew for sure, but the assumption in the Hunters Lodge was that he had killed a doe and fawn "without singing," that is without speaking even the essential formula at the death, a brief, worn-down version of the butchers' formula:

Beautiful one,
for your death my words!

This formula was spoken by a hunter shooting, by a trapper opening the trap, by anyone felling a tree, by anyone taking life. That it could be *forgotten* was not considered a possibility. Young Moon's omission was deliberate; therefore punishable.

Even when a corn-borer was squashed, a mosquito swatted, a branch broken, a flower picked, the formula was muttered in its ultimately reduced form: *amoyia*, "my word[s]." Although the one-word formula was spoken as mindlessly as our "bless you" to a sneeze, it was always spoken. The speaking of it maintained and contained the idea of need

and fulfillment, demand and response, of relationship and interdependence; and that idea could be brought fully to mind when it was wanted. The stone, as they said, contains the mountain.

One- or two-word formulas of this kind were known as pebbles. Another of them was the word *ruha*, spoken when one added a pebble (a material one) to the cairn or heap at certain places—by certain boulders, at crossroads, at various places along the paths on Ana Kulun. The word was without other meaning to most people than "the word you say when you add a stone to a heya cairn." Scholars of the heyimas knew it to be an archaic form of the root *-hur-*, to sustain, carry along, take with one. It was the last word of a lost sentence. The present stone contains the absent mountain. Most of the "meaningless" matrix-syllables of songs were pebble-words. The word *heyra* was the word that contained the world, visible and invisible, on this side and on the other side of death.

Pandora Sitting by the Creek

XX



THE CREEK OF Sinshan below big rocks makes a pool on gravel, shallow, the gravel rising into an island in the middle of the pool. The banks of dark adobe overhang it, a few feet apart. At the outlet of the pool the rib-bone of a steer lies half in the water, whitish. In the still water deep under the undercut bank where roots make tracery, the tail feathers of a dead bird lie moving slightly on the water. The curled claw can be seen under the brown-feathered corpse hanging in the clear water in the brown shadow. Half the branches that cross the creek are dead and half alive and some it's hard to say. There are no fish in the water but there are water-skaters on it and many gnats, flies, and mosquitoes in the air. Above the floating dead bird gnats or small flies dance in a swarm. The people are dancing the Summer.

