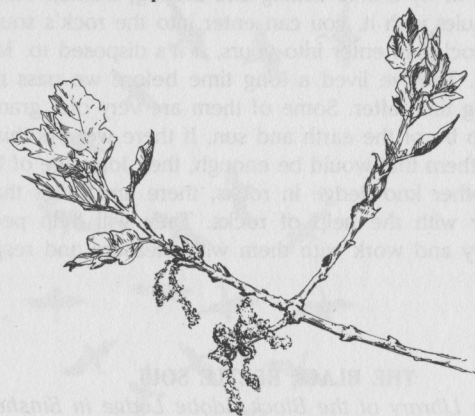


ALWAYS COMING HOME

is called the black beetle soul, or the dark string, or the death soul. It is not a shadow or image of the body, any more than the body alive or dead is an image of it. It eats shit and shits food. While other souls and their body are awake it usually sleeps, and it is waking up while they go to sleep; they pass each other then, but do not turn their heads. While the body is dying, the death-soul is coming alive. It is what forgets. It makes mistakes, accidents, and many dreams. They say it inhabits the basements of the Nine Houses. It receives its body very tenderly at death and takes it into the dark. When rain falls on the ashes of the cremated body, the death soul may come up into the air. It is blind, and immensely wealthy. If you go down into its dwelling-places you will be given much. The problem is how to carry it back with you. When you speak to the deep soul you must shut your eyes; when you leave it you may not look back. When rain falls on a fire the death souls come into the air, darkening the air. The time they come is at the beginning of the rainy season, when the nights grow long and there is smoke in the air, the time when the house Rejoining is built. A vest or coat of moleskin is worn by people of the Black Adobe Lodge when they sing or teach or dream. A black string may be tied around the dancer's arm or heart or head. A beetle may show them the way. There is no way to know this soul. It is the inmost. A person dies to it.



PRAISING THE OAKS.

*A teaching rubric from the Serpentine heyimas in Sinshan.*

Five oaks, the Roundhead with the long acorn on the seaward slopes, the Furrowbark of our chaparral, the greybarked Longcup, the Great Oak of the mountains, the Tanners' Oak with buckeye blossom and acorn seed, they keep their leaves in the rainy season.

Some Brief Valley Texts



Four oaks, the Blueleaf that wants dry earth at its root, the lobeleaved Finewood of the hills, the blackbarked Redleaf of the high hills, and the Valley Oak, great-girthed, shady, praised by scribes, that lives by the waters and on sunlit hills, they lose their leaves in the rainy season.

These are the nine noble and pleasant oaks, vigorous trees, sweet in the male and the female flower, towns of many birds and small animal and insect people, giving much shade, giving much food, great wealthy ones worthy of praise.

WORDS/BIRDS.

*A Madrone Lodge text.*

What works for words may not work for things, and to say that because two sayings that contradict each other cannot both be true is not to say that opposites do not exist. The word is not the thing; word and thing have each their own way. It is true that a town is made of stone, clay, and wood; it is true that a town is made of people. These words do not deny each other at all. It is true that a bird's way and the wind blowing make a feather fall; it is true that finding that feather in my way I understand that it has fallen for me. Those words deny each other in part. It is true that everything that is must be as it is, and that nothing is but the play of illusion upon the void; it is true that everything is and it is true that nothing is. These words deny each other wholly. The world of our life is the weaving that holds them together while holding them apart. The world is the bridge between the walls of a canyon, the banks of a river in an abyss, and words are the birds that fly across and across. They cannot be in two places at the same time. But they can cross and come back. It takes all one's life long to cross the bridge to the other side. But the birds fly back and forth across the canyon, singing and speaking from one side to the other.

THE CATS HERE DON'T CARE.

*Some sayings, wise saws, and small stones from the Valley.*

Why are you making the house so clean?  
Because there's going to be an earthquake.

If there was only one of anything, it would be the end of the world.

ALWAYS COMING HOME

Judgment is poverty.

When I'm afraid I listen to the silence of the fieldmouse.  
When I'm fearless I listen to the silence of the mousing cat.

If you don't teach machines and horses to do what you want in their way they'll teach you to do what they want in your way.

To go again where you have gone: Increase. To go backwards: Danger.  
Better to come round.

Multitude, Diversity, Quantity, Exuberance.  
Rarity, Purity, Quality, Chastity.

Nothing can make water better.

More than is needed is life.

The Valley is the House of Earth and the Left-Hand Way. The Mountain is the hinge of the heyiya-if. To enter upon the Right-Hand Way one goes up on the Mountain, and from it into the House of Sky, and looking back one sees the Valley as the dead see it.

To be singleminded is to be unmindful. Mindfulness is keeping many different things in mind and observing their relations and proportions.

To conquer is to be careless. Carefulness is holding oneself and one's acts in appropriate relation and proportion to the many other beings and intentions.

To take is to be joyless. Joyfulness is accepting the given, which cannot be earned by mindfulness nor deserved by carefulness.

The great hunter: one arrow in his quiver, one thought in his head.

Some Brief Valley Texts

Cats may be green somewhere else, but the cats here don't care.

All the mountains in a little stone.

Owning is owing, having is hoarding.

*Like* and *different* are quickening words, brooding and hatching.  
*Better* and *worse* are eggsucking words, they leave only the shell.

Care may be questioned with care, joy with joy.

Read what the worms write on the madrone leaf, and walk sideways.



One day a little before the Summer I was working in the storage barns above Moon Creek. The Art had put in a new generator there, and I was checking out the wiring to the threshers, some of which needed reinsulation; the mice had been at it. I was working away there in a dark, dusty crawl-space, hearing the mice scuttering about overhead in the rafters and between the walls. Presently I noticed with part of my attention that several people were in the crawl-space with me, watching what I was doing. They were greyish-brown people with long, slender, white hands and feet, and bright eyes; I had never seen them before, but they seemed familiar. I said, while I went on working, "I wish you would not take the insulation off the wires. A fire could start. There must be better things to eat, in a grain barn!"

The people laughed a little, and the darkest one said in a high, soft voice, "Bedding."

They looked behind them then, and went away quickly and quietly. Somebody else was there. I felt one little chill of fear. At first I couldn't see the person clearly in that twilight of the crawl-space; then I saw it was Tarweed.

"You never ride horses any more, Flicker," he said.

"Riding is for the young, Tarweed," I said.

"Are you old?"

"Nearly forty years old."

"And you don't miss riding?"

He was teasing me, as people had teased me once about being in love with the roan horse.

"No, I don't miss that."

"What do you miss?"

"My child that died."

"Why should you miss him?"

"He is dead."

"So am I," said Tarweed. And so he was. He had died five years ago.

So I knew then what it was I missed, what I wanted. It was only not to be shut into the House of Earth. I did not have to go in and out the doors, if only I could see those who did. There was Tarweed, and he laughed a little, like the mice.

He did not say anything more, but watched me in the shadows. When I was done with the work, he was gone. When I left the barn I saw the barn owl high up on a rafter, sleeping.

I went home to Milk's household. I told her at supper about Tarweed and the mice.

She listened, and began to cry a little. She was weak since the stroke and her fierceness sometimes turned to tears. She said, "You were always ahead of me, going ahead of me!"



I had never known that she envied me. It made me sad to know it, and yet I wanted to laugh at the way we waste our feelings. "Somebody has to open the door!" I said. I showed her the people who were coming into the room, the kind of people I used to see when I was a young child. I knew they were indeed my kin, but I did not know who they were. I asked Milk, "Who are they?"

She was bewildered at first, and could not see well, and complained. The people began to speak, and she to answer. Sometimes they spoke this language and sometimes I did not understand what they said; but she answered them eagerly.

When she grew tired, they went away quietly, and I helped her to bed. As she began to go to sleep I saw a little child come and lie down beside her. She put her arms around it. Every night after that until Milk died in the winter the child came to her bed to sleep.

Once I spoke of it, saying, "Your daughter." Milk looked at me with that whipping look in her one good eye. She said, "Not my daughter. Yours."

So I keep that house now with the daughter I never bore, the child of my first love, and with others of my family. Sometimes when I sweep the floor of that house I see the dust in a shaft of sunlight, dancing in curves and spirals, flickering.

## NOTES:

p. 284. *vetulou*

A game a little like polo, played on horseback, with an openwork wicker ball scooped and thrown by long-handled wicker scoops; see the section "Playing" in the Back of the Book.

p. 285. *sevai*

*Sevai* means sheathed. It was a congenital degenerative condition, affecting the

# THE WILLOWS

A we-ye - wey he-yi - ya a  
na - - am na - am  
ge-wak - wa sur ye - he - yi - ya na - - am na - am  
na - - am na - am  
wi - sú-yú wi-sú-yú wi-sú - yú  
om ó - na - am wi - sú-yú -  
we -he-yi - ya ó - na-am ó -na-am ó -na-am  
sur om om om

# QUAIL SONG

Fe - ho - chan am na pa - rad - tun am na fe-ho-chan am na  
pa - ra - dan am na kaili-kú ge-le hú ge-le hú kailikú  
hú kaili- kú dí-ú hú kaili-kú ge-le dí-ú kaili-kú hú  
pa - rad - tun am na fe - ho - chan am na  
pa - rad-tun am na fe-ho-chan am na pa - ra-dan am na  
kaili-kú ge-le hú ge-le hú kaili- kú hú kaili - kú dí - ú  
hú kaili - kú ge-le dí - ú kaili - kú hú pa - rad-tun am na



## A Note and a Chart Concerning Narrative Modes

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The principal mode of our thinking is binary: on/off, hard/soft, true/false, etc. Our categories of narrative follow the pattern. Narrative is either factual (nonfiction) or nonfactual (fiction). The distinction is clear, and the feeble forms such as the "novelised biography" or the "nonfiction novel" that attempt to ignore it only demonstrate its firmness.

In the Valley the distinction is gradual and messy. The kind of narrative that tells "what happened" is never clearly defined by genre, style, or valuation from the kind that tells a story "like what happened." Some of the Romantic Tales certainly recount real events; some of the sober Historical Accounts concern events which we do not admit into the category of the real, or the possible. Here of course is the difference: where you stop, on what grounds you stop, and say, "Reality goes no further."

If fact and fiction are not clearly separated in Kesh literature, truth and falsehood, however, are. A deliberate lie (slander, boast, tall tale) is identified as such and is not considered in the light of literature at all. In this case I find our categories perhaps less clear than theirs. The distinction is one of intent, and we often do not make it at all, since we allow propaganda to be qualified both as journalism and as fiction; while the Kesh dismiss it as a lie.

The accompanying chart attempts to show these continuities and discontinuities.

