

the house, piled it in. The stick of wood she had found kept rolling around, rolling here and there.

She thought: "What is the matter with that stick anyhow?" It kept rolling around. Evening came. She went to bed. That stick rolled into her bed. It lay there. In the morning the stick rolled out and disappeared. After a while the stick rolled back with a dead deer, which it had killed, for the stick was a person.

It rolled around over the deer and the deer was cut up as though by a person. The stick put the meat in the house. The girl was helping. The stick rolled around to the edge of the fire as it cooked meat.

The young woman laid the baskets down for the cooked deer meat. Everything was cooked. She set the acorn mush down. The stick rolled up to the food and away as though eating.

The grandmother did not know about the stick, for the young woman did not tell her. She gave her grandmother some meat on a basket plate. The old lady did not know what to make of it, for they had had no meat before. The girl said: "I did not tell you everything. The other day I was getting wood. I found a stick, a nice pretty little stick. I did not know I had found a man. I picked up the stick not knowing it was a man."

Then they ate the meat. The grandmother said: "Grandchild, you did well."

They lived that way. The stick of wood rolled out when going hunting. After killing deer, it would roll home. When wood was needed, the stick would roll out and all the wood would come to the door. They lived that way. Everything he did, he did by rolling. Every time he hunted he rolled out.

Night would come. They went to bed. The stick would roll around, roll on top of her, roll between her legs, having intercourse. The first thing she knew she had a boy baby.

They lived that way for quite a while. The stick killed deer and got wood and acorns. Pretty soon she was pregnant again. She bore a girl. She thus had two children by the stick.

COAST YUKI

Not only was the stick a *person*, but the story itself was a kind of person as well—a rather fussy person who demanded proper treatment. The narrator dared summon the story only at night and only during the winter; otherwise the story might turn on the narrator and cause him or her to become hunch-backed. If the teller omitted any detail, the story would cause illness. When finished with the telling, the narrator would turn attention away from the audience and address the story directly: "Well, it is done," the narrator would say. "You go back into the rock hole." Like everything else in the world the story was magically alive, possessing will, intelligence, and the power to do good or harm. Like everything else in the world, the story had to be treated

The Girl Who Married Rattlesnake

The perception that everything in the world was alive gave commonality to all things. Everything was a person, everything was "kin," and thus nothing in the world was really foreign. Even a rattlesnake was a "brother"—so close to us in nature that he could fall in love with a woman and she with him. Such a love story, inconceivable in our culture, is treated matter-of-factly, with dignity and even tenderness.

At a place called Cobowin there is a large rock with a hole in it and there were many rattlesnakes in this hole. At Kalesima nearby there was a village with four large houses. In one of these large houses which had a center pole there lived a girl. This was in the spring of the year when the clover was just right to eat. This girl went out to gather clover and one of the rattlesnakes watched her. When she had a sufficient amount of this food she took it home and gave it to her mother.

Rattlesnake went to the village and when he had approached very near to the house he transformed himself into a young man with a head-net on his head and fine beads around his neck. He made himself look as handsome as possible. Then he climbed up onto the top of the house and came down the center pole. He went to this girl and told her that he wanted to marry her and he remained there with the family. The following morning he went home again. This he did for four days. On the fifth evening he came back but this time he did not change his form. He simply went into the house and talked just as he had before. The girl's mother said that there was someone over there talking all the time. She made a light and looked over in the place where she heard the sound, and there was Rattlesnake. He shook his head and frightened her terribly. She dropped the light and ran.

On the following morning Rattlesnake took the girl home with him and she remained there. Finally this girl had four children and as they grew up, whenever they saw any of the people from the village, they would say to their mother, "We are going to bite those people." But she would say, "No, you must not do that. Those are your relatives." And the children would do as she told them.

Now these four rattlesnake boys were out playing around one day as they grew a little older. Finally they became curious. They came in and asked their mother, "Why do you not talk the way we do? Why are you so different?"

"I am not a rattlesnake," she replied. "I am a human being. I am different from you and your father."

"Are you not afraid of our father?" asked the boys. "No," she answered. Then the oldest of the rattlesnake boys said that he had heard the other rattlesnakes talking and that they too thought it strange that she was so different from them and that they were going to investigate and see just why it was that she was so different. They were going to crawl over her body and

when the rattlesnakes all came they crawled over her and she was not alarmed in any way.

Then she said to her oldest boy, "It is impossible for you to become a human being and I am not really a human being any longer, so I am going back to my parents and tell them what has happened." She did go home and she said to her parents, "This is the last time that I shall be able to talk to you and the last time that you will be able to talk with me." Her father and mother felt very sad about this, but they said nothing. Then the daughter started to leave, but her mother ran after her and caught her right by the door, brought her back into the house and wept over her because she was so changed. Then the girl shook her body and suddenly she was gone. No one knew how or where she went, but she really went back to Rattlesnake's house where she has lived ever since.

CHARLEY BROWN, POMO

The Man and the Owls

Animals, plants, and objects were *people*, and like people they were thought of as belonging to families that overshadowed individuality. In the Wintu language, for example, one would say, "There is *deerness* on the meadow," whether one deer or a hundred were present. In the Indian mind all the deer in the world comprised a unit of which an individual deer was just a fragment. Every deer was linked to every other deer and shared a common deer consciousness. Thus rather than stalking individual, unconnected deer, the Indian hunter was forever approaching *deerness*: if he mistreated a deer or even a deer carcass it was not an isolated act between him and a solitary deer, but a crime against the entire *deerness* of the world. In the future the *deerness* would withdraw from him, or even injure him.

A man and his wife were traveling. They camped overnight in a cave. They had a fire burning. Then they heard a horned owl (*butulu*) hoot. The woman said to her husband: "Call in the same way. He will come and you can shoot him. Then we will eat him for supper." The man got his bow and arrows ready and called. The owl answered, coming nearer. At last it sat on a tree near the fire. The man shot. He killed it. Then his wife told him: "Do it again. Another one will come." Again he called and brought an owl and shot it. He said: "It is enough now." But his wife said: "No. Call again. If you call them in the morning they will not come. We have had no meat for a long time. We shall want something to eat tomorrow as well as now." Then the man called. More owls came. There were more and more of them. He shot, but more came. The air was full of owls. All his arrows were gone. The owls came closer and attacked them. The man took sticks from the fire and fought them off. He covered the woman with a basket and kept on fighting. More and more owls came. At last they killed both the man and the woman.

YOKUTS

According to California Indian thought, people, plants, animals, and objects were basically equals. The relationship between people and animals was not one of exploitation, but of reciprocity. People had to respect animals and perform certain rites for them; animals on their part provided people with food and skins. People and animals lived in balance, and to maintain that balance demanded mutual restraint. Animals acted benevolently toward people despite the animals' extraordinary physical and spiritual powers. People did not slaughter needlessly or humiliate the carcass of a slain animal despite humanity's great hunting prowess. To reach beyond reciprocity and demand more than one's due was to upset the balance and ultimately bring punishment.

Many Relatives

To modern people, educated in European modes of thought, competition is what defines relationships. People, plants, and animals compete, both with their own kind and with other species, for scarce resources, evolving over millenia in a harsh world that rewards the fittest with survival, punishes the weak with extinction. Modern political, economic, psychological, educational, and biological sciences are all to a huge extent based on the idea that competition lies at the basis of life.

California Indians, and most other traditional people, certainly recognized that competition existed, and that it was important. But they did not elevate it to the status of prime cause. Rather, they felt, in a world in which everything was alive, in which everything had a place and a role ordained from the beginning of time, it was not the competition between beings but rather their interrelatedness that underlay the functioning of the world.

We had many relatives and... we all had to live together; so we'd better learn how to get along with each other. She [my mother] said it wasn't too hard to do. It was just like taking care of your younger brother or sister. You got to know them, find out what they like and what made them cry, so you'd know what to do. If you took good care of them you didn't have to work as hard. Sounds like it's not true, but it is. When that baby gets to be a man or woman they're going to help you out.

You know, I thought she was talking about us Indians and how we are supposed to get along. I found out later by my older sister that mother wasn't just talking about Indians, but the plants, animals, birds—everything on this earth. They are our relatives and we better know how to act around them or they'll get after us.

LUCY SMITH, DRY CREEK POMO