

Often I recall that day,
the river pavilion
in the setting sun, and
we too drunk to know
the way home. As
our high spirits
fled, we started
to return late
in our boat,
but were confused
and entered,
 deeply,
a place where
the flowering lotus
was in full bloom.
And struggling to go through,
struggling
 to go through,
we startled
a whole sandbank of herons
into flight!

Li Qingzhao

Caoshan asked Elder De, “The Buddha’s true Dharma body is like space. It responds to things — manifesting its forms the way the moon appears in the water. How do you explain this responsiveness?”

De said, “It’s like a donkey sees a well.”

“That’s most of it, but not the whole thing.”

“How do you see it?”

“It is like the well sees the donkey.”



Vernal Equinox Koan Retreat

2011

When Siddhartha almost died from the harsh austerities he'd been practicing, a memory floated into his mind of a moment in his childhood: He was placed under a rose-apple tree and forgotten for awhile. He's a little boy, scarcely more than a baby. He looks around and senses how pleasant the air is, and the hills, the shade, the grass, the branches. There is nothing else on his mind. Nobody is looking at him. The world pays no attention. The boy's eyes slowly scan the whole scene. There is no resistance, there is no tension, there is no desire. Everything is completed, self-sufficient. There is nothing to add, nothing to subtract. Cautiously, [his adult] mind penetrates itself, then, almost playing, formulates these words: Perhaps this is the way that leads to awakening. And a question forms: Are you afraid of this happiness?

from Roberto Calasso, *Ka*



Even in Kyôto—
hearing the cuckoo's cry—
I long for Kyôto

Bashô



Zhaozhou said, "It's as though you come across a secret word and you don't know the meaning, but you recognize the handwriting."

At the evening gathering, Linji said, "Sometimes I take away the person but not the environment. Sometimes I take away the environment but not the person. Sometimes I take away both person and environment. Sometimes I take away neither person nor environment."

A monastic asked, "What does it mean to take away the person but not the environment?"

Linji said, "The spring sun emerges, covering the earth with brocade. A little child's hair hangs down, white as silken strands."

"What does it mean to take away the environment but not the person?"

"The sovereign's rule spreads throughout the land. Generals beyond the border no longer taste the smoke and dust of battle."

"What does it mean to take away both person and environment?"

"No news from the borderlands—they stand alone, a region apart."

"What does it mean to take away neither person nor environment?"

"The sovereign enters the jeweled palace; old farmers sing their songs."



Love yourself. Then forget it. Then, love the world.

Mary Oliver