

*The DREAM  
of the  
WORLD*

*Koan Retreat  
October 2006*



Joan Sutherland  
The Open Source

*In the autumn the veils between the worlds grow thin, and we become aware of the deeper voices we often miss—the voices of our ancestors, of the spirits of the land, of our own hearts. Koans can help us explore how to listen for, and how to respond to, these ancient voices of the harvest season.*

**I**n such troubled times, where was Guanyin, the bodhisattva of compassion?

She was in the marketplace all the time, but nobody recognized her.

## **HARVEST QUESTIONS**

### ***This year's harvest***

Each year asks something of us  
and each year gives us something

At what altars did you worship this year? ... What are you harvesting? ... What have you sacrificed? ... What did you give up willingly, and what losses do you mourn? ... What prayers were answered? ... What unexpected grace fell into your life?

### ***What is left undone ...***

Between the harvest and the winter solstice  
is a time of taking stock & settling things

### ***... that needs completing***

When you look into your heart, what can you  
set right before the end of the year?

### ***... that needs holding a while longer***

Are there questions to which the truest answer is,  
I don't know? ... Can you allow the questions to resolve  
in their own time?

### ***... that needs releasing***

What is it time to let go of? ... Can you open your hands  
& let something fall away, so that all of life can take care  
of it?

## Mirror Zen

Poem:

As night falls, no more reflections in the mirror,  
Yet my heart sees them clearly.

Question:

What is the color and form of that heart which sees in the dark?

*There is a communal dreaming going  
on underneath everything, a great  
river of co-creation where the world is  
made, moment by moment, by  
everyone together. In that river our  
individual dreams, our individual  
lives, touch and are touched by the  
dreams of others. Koans offer a way to  
explore the great dream of the world  
and our own individual lives as part  
of that dream.*

## Questionnaire Andrew Schelling

### First Facts

What animal before being born human?

What plant?

Tallest mountain attempted? The most treacherous?

How were you nearly killed by the residents of a far-off nation?

Three books you'd take to the woods

### Getting in Deeper

Intentional community (utopian, anarchist, feminist, archaic) you might have lived in before it was scattered by officers of the State

Historical epoch best suited to your temper. Give three lines from a poem you composed there.

Writer prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century you would most like to sleep with

Most useful oracle

Dictionary most frequently visited

These are the "permanent emotions" (India): erotic, comic, compassionate, angry, heroic, fearsome, odious, marvelous, tranquil. Add two more known only to yourself.

Foreign language you have vowed to master this lifetime

Melville, Thoreau, Dickinson, Whitman, or Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz? Anne Bradstreet, Frederick Douglass, Chief Joseph, Mother Jones?

### The Rites of Night & Day

Pencil, pen, typewriter, laptop, or pocket knife?

Philosopher never read, but instinctively know has altered your life

On a rocky outcropping, in a car, in a café, gone "virtual", or sequestered among books?

Skills mastered in sleep

Power objects you carry or wear at all times. Some of the time. To bed.

Magdalena, Olduvai, Dunhuang, or Hovenweep?

Who among the old gods and goddesses?

Farther back?

# THE KOANS

## *The Koans Offer Advice*

Quickly, quickly, without thinking right and wrong, before your parents were born, what is your original face?

Linji said, "Face the world and walk crosswise."

Step by step in the dark —  
If your foot's not wet,  
it found the stone.

~ Shaku Soyen

world."

## *The Veil Between the Worlds Grows Thin*

A monk asked Jianfeng, "One of the old texts says, 'Buddhas in every direction, one straight road to nirvana.' I wonder where that road is."

Jianfeng raised his staff, drew a line in the air, and said, "Here it is."

Later someone asked Yunmen about this. Yunmen held up his fan and said, "Strike the carp of the Eastern Sea once, and the rain comes down in torrents."

You find yourself in a stone crypt. There are no windows and the door is locked from the outside. How will you get out?

Save a ghost

Raise this world to the angel  
~ Rainer Maria Rilke

## *Ancestors*

A monk asked Daguang, "People like Bodhidharma become ancestors, right?"  
Daguang said, "No."  
The monk asked, "If Bodhidharma isn't our ancestor, then why did he come from the West?"  
"So that you won't worship ancestors."  
"After you stop worshipping ancestors, then what?"  
"Then you know they aren't your ancestors."

A monk asked Caoshan, "What's it like when you put aside your mourning clothes?"  
Caoshan said, "Today I have fulfilled my duty to my parents."  
"What about after you have fulfilled your duty?"  
"I love to get drunk."

A monk asked Hongzhi, "What of the ones who have gone?"  
Hongzhi said, "White clouds rise to the top of the valleys, blue peaks lean high into the empty sky."  
The monk asked, "What of the ones who return?"  
Hongzhi said, "Heads covered in white hair, leaving the cliffs and valleys. In the dead of night descending through the clouds to the market stalls."  
"What of the ones who neither come nor go?"  
"The stone woman calls them back from their dream of the world."