

Awakening
Homage to Hakuin, Zen Master, 1685~1768

by Lucien Stryk

I
Shoichi brushed the black
on thick.
His circle held a poem
like buds
above a flowering bowl.

Since the moment of my
pointing,
this bowl, an "earth device,"
holds
nothing but the dawn.

II
A freeze last night, the window's
laced ice flowers, a meadow drifting
from the glacier's side. I think of Hakuin:

"Freezing in an icefield, stretched
thousands of miles in all directions,
I was alone, transparent, and could not move."

Legs cramped, mind pointing
like a torch, I cannot see beyond
the frost, out nor in. And do not move.

III
I balance the round stone
in my palm,
turn it full circle,

slowly, in the late sun,
spring to now.
Severe compression,

like a troubled head,
stings my hand.
It falls. A small dust rises.

IV
Beyond the sycamore

dark air moves
westward—

smoke, cloud, something
wanting a name.
Across the window,
my gathered breath,
I trace
a simple word.

V
My daughter gathers shells
where thirty years before
I'd turned them over, marvelling.

I take them from her,
make, at her command,
the universe. Hands clasped,

marking the limits of
a world, we watch till sundown
planets whirling in the sand.

VI
Softness everywhere,
snow a smear,
air a gray sack.

Time. Place. Thing.
Felt between
skin and bone, flesh.

VII
I write in the dark again,
rather by dusk-light,
and what I love about

this hour is the way the trees
are taken, one by one,
into the great wash of darkness.

At this hour I am always happy,
ready to be taken myself,
fully aware.