

The rhinoceros fan is broken

Yanguan, the teacher, is amused.

Bring me the rhinoceros then

he tells his student.

The koan hints at

the unimaginable, the inconceivable,

But all I can do is mourn

an exquisite rhinoceros

whose body went into

a Japanese fan, now broken,

so many centuries ago.

Another koan altogether.

Zhaozhou's Dog*

She pretended she was lacking
not to unsettle the teacher she loved.

She had Buddha nature all right

If truth be known, she was on the path
of the Bodhisattva – lying close to Zhaozhou
in the snow, offering light to his dark.

She was the ear he spoke into, as he wept
at his awakened rivals, his bumpkin students.
Only she listened.

When he despaired of moon, lakes, mountains,
all beauty gone, she tossed a stone
to ring the great temple bell.

Kuan Yin had come – he knew.

*

'Does a dog have Buddha nature or not?'

'No,' Zhaozhou replied..

Wendy Woodward