

## POEMS

### Why a Zen monk of dubious repute persists in calling himself thus

Manu Bazzano

Because I inherited this love of living-and-dying.  
Because I never took the bourgeois vows of purity, property & patriotism but the *bodhisattva* vows of complicity with living-and-dying.  
Because I see a Buddha in everyone.  
Because the Dharma is paradox.  
Because I like sitting on my bottom, doing nothing, an hour a day.  
Because doing nothing an hour a day is not ‘a higher level of consciousness’.  
Because consciousness comes out of phenomena like a child from her mother.  
Because when I sit I listen to the inexorable decay.  
Because ‘those bright fires shine subject to decay’.  
Because ‘my death is certain but the hour unsure’.  
Because there is nothing missing.  
Because ordinary mind is the Buddha.  
Because inauthenticity is the Buddha.  
Because to the question ‘What is Buddha?’, Joshu replied ‘Dry shit-stick’.  
Because enlightenment is delusion.  
Because delusion is enlightenment.  
Because there is no self.  
Because there is no Self.  
Because my head is shaven but I respond to beauty all around.  
Because ‘beauty all around’ is not just clouds and daffodils but for instance the beauty of women.  
Because it’s autumn and dead leaves remind me that nothing lasts: neither joy nor pleasure, nor bitterness and pain.  
Because I have feet on the ground but they are not planted; I can still move or dance.  
Because illusions are illusions but they give me a taste of life.  
Because the Dharma too is an illusion even though majestic and making me weep with joy.  
Because the Dharma is a raft for crossing the river.  
Because after crossing the river you don’t put the raft on an altar and light incense and prostrate.  
Because the Dharma is a wild plant and cannot breathe in the greenhouse of academia.  
Because the Dharma cannot be bought by a major academic publisher.  
Because love is the sweetest illusion.  
Because love, art, and meditation are illusions that make life liveable and delay its denigration.  
Because to see the world in black & white is to wage war to myself and the world.  
Because ‘Zen monk’ doesn’t mean I’m an effing priest.

Because I'm not having my brain scanned to measure the beneficial effects of *zazen* for your research.

Because I don't *really* believe you can measure empathy and neither do you, but I understand that it comes in handy for your Ph.D.

Because the Dharma is in everything, living/non-living, human/non-human.

Because without a sense of the non-human, ecology is the last resort of the narcissist.

Because the greatest idiocy is to make of the Dharma a religion.

Because the second greatest idiocy is to make of the Dharma a science.

Because the Dharma is affirmative art.

Because I learn from the rivalry and jealousy of women.

Because I learn from the passion and tenderness of women.

Because I learn from the solidarity and tender heart of men.

Because I learn from the rivalry and envy of psychotherapists.

Because I learn from the rivalry and envy of spiritual people.

Because I learn from my own rivalry and envy.

Because through sex I give my body, but my heart too; I give what I have, though it is not that much.

Because in the above is partly the cryptic meaning of offering incense to the Buddha.

Because this very body is the Buddha.

Because the greatest offering is to give what I do not have.

Because this imperfect and muddled life is the life of the Buddha.

Because the idea of perfection erodes the beauty of imperfection.

Because samsara is nirvana.

Because there is no nirvana apart from samsara.

Because this valley of tears is paradise.

Because you can polish a brick all you like, it'll never become a mirror.

Because my Zen Buddhist esoteric practice consists in managing to pay the rent.

Because I'm learning some gratitude at last.

Because it's 2.24AM and I'm wide awake.

Because we just moved flat.

Because one day I will die.

Because Zen ordination, *tokudo*, means becoming *homeless*.

Because there is no permanent dwelling anywhere.

Because we are all migrants.

Because I haven't got a clue.

Because this mystery beats me.

*Kan ze on bon nen kan ze on nen nen ju shin nen nen fu ri shin.*

**Manu Bazzano**