

## Buddha's Dogs

I'm at a day-long meditation retreat, eight hours of watching  
my mind with my mind,  
and I already fell asleep twice and nearly fell out of my chair,  
and it's not even noon yet.

In the morning session, I learned to count my thoughts, ten in  
on minute, and the longest  
was to leave and go to San Anselmo and shop, then find an outdoor cafe and order a glass

of Sancerre, smoked trout with roasted potatoes and baby  
carrots and a bowl of gazpacho.  
But I stayed and learned to name my thoughts, so far they are:  
wanting, wanting, wanting,

wanting, wanting, wanting, wanting, wanting, judgment,  
sadness. *Don't identify with your  
thoughts, the teacher says, you are not your personality, not your  
ego-identification,*

then he bangs the gong for lunch. Whoever, whatever I am is  
given instruction  
in the walking meditation and the eating meditation and walks  
outside with the other

meditators, and we wobble across the lake like *The Night of the  
Living Dead.*

I meditate slowly, falling over a few times because I kept my  
foot in the air too long,

towards a bench, sit slowly down, and slowly eat my sandwich,  
noticing the bread,  
(sourdough), noticing the taste, (tuna, sourdough), noticing  
the smell, (sourdough, tuna),

thanking the sourdough, the tuna, the ocean, the boat, the  
fisherman, the field, the grain,  
the farmer, the Saran Wrap that kept this food fresh for this  
body made of food and desire

and the hope of getting through the rest of this day without  
dying of boredom.

Sun then cloud then sun. I notice a maple leaf on my sandwich.  
It seems awfully large.

Slowly brushing it away, I feel so sad I can hardly stand it, so I  
name my thoughts; they are:  
sadness about my mother, judgment about my father, wanting  
the child I never had.

I notice I've been chasing the same thoughts like dogs around  
the same park most of my life,  
notice the leaf tumbling gold to the grass. The gong sounds,  
and back in the hall.

I decide to try lying down meditation, and let myself sleep. The  
Buddha in my dream is me,  
surrounded by dogs wagging their tails, licking my hands.  
I wake up

for the forgiveness meditation, the teacher saying, *never put  
anyone out of your heart,*  
and the heart opens and knows it won't last and will have to  
open again and again,

chasing those dogs around and around in the sun then cloud  
then sun.

~ Susan Browne ~

(*Buddha's Dogs*)