

THE
INTUITIVE WRITER

LISTENING TO YOUR OWN VOICE

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PENGUIN COMPASS

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THE STONE WOMAN GIVING BIRTH



MONK: "Where can I enter Zen?"

MASTER GENSHA: "Can you hear the babbling brook?"

MONK: "Yes, I can hear it."

MASTER GENSHA: "Then enter there."¹

In ancient Japan, if you wanted to study a martial art, you sought out a master and asked to become his student. When he accepted you, your training began. After any number of years, the master might say, "You're ready now. Teach on your own." At that point, your training was over.

At the beginning of your training, you would be given a white belt to hold your *gi* together. After much time, the white belt, which musn't be washed, would get extremely dirty. Eventually it became so stained that it could only be called a black belt. By some indiscernible process, you gradually became the black belt along with your uniform.

Learning without a reference point, while in vogue in

the East, is problematic for Westerners, who generally want to know where they stand. “How am I doing?” they ask, a question that rivets around “I.” “How” is not important (usually) and “doing” has only one correlative—BEST! (in comparison to everyone else). “BEST” is the measurement of the value of “I” that often allows “me” to continue existing.

What’s missing from this picture? One answer is *yoriki* (the power of concentration). It releases the “I” that exists-because-it-exists-because-it-exists.

Yoriki builds up slowly, non-linearly. Skipping steps equals going backward. Skipping steps leads to pride, and pride leads to (a sense of) expertise. Expertise leaves no gaps, no questions, no quest. Death.

The imagining ear picks up (hears) one’s question and, by bringing it into sharp focus, transmutes it into doubt. Doubt leads to an entry point—an entry to a Way. Writers, by doubt, enter the “Way” of writing.