

Tea Ceremony

Reiko takes me there,
to the sensei's home and gallery:
flowers in a pyramid of stone,
calligraphy on the wall
and painted fans from every era.

In a special alcove, *tokonoma*
a handwoven scroll of delicate
braided pastels bordering
the careful brush
of pen shodo.

A woman in silver kimono
serves us chrysanthemum sake—
three yellow petals in a clear rice wine.
When she turns to leave
autumn on her obi sash
is silver, gold and rust.

The ceremony begins: legs folded under
we sit on tatami and watch
as sensei cleans the cup,
scoops out the green green powder, *matcha*
dips the thin wood ladle
into the kettle, fills the bowl,
and bamboo whisks
the tea into a froth
of green: spirit of zen, ballet of wrist.

The bowl is not just a bowl in your hand
and right is not left—you can't pivot
on ignorance—clockwise three rotations
and then you drink, wiping your touch
clean, rotating the bowl back

before others drink
and it is cleaned, returned
and re-turned again:
epitome of orbit, the essence of
clouds over the moon.

Deirdre Dwyer