

COLD MOUNTAIN POEMS



HAN SHAN

Edited and translated by J. P. SEATON

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Cold Mountain Poems

*Zen Poems of Han Shan,
Shih Te, and Wang Fan-chih*

TRANSLATED BY

J. P. Seaton



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FRONTISPICE: *Landscape after Guo Zhongshu* by Zhu D
(Chinese, 1624–1705). Hanging scroll, ink on paper, 109.9 x 56.4 cm.
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For Jim Sanford, who is
Han Shan.

To Iris and Aja

And always for KPS.

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Cold Mountain Poems

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Introduction

HAN SHAN AND SHIH TE have been the most popular icons of Mahayana Buddhism, and Zen Buddhism in particular, for more than a thousand years. Their poetry traveled to Japan nearly as quickly as Zen itself, and there, as in China, it inspired a popular and long-lasting tradition of paintings, and of rubbings from stone-carved images of their figures. Like those images, the poetry of Han Shan and Shih Te has survived everywhere into the present century. They are poets to laugh with, to make friends with, and to recognize, easily, as bodhisattvas, Buddhist saints whose purpose in life, and in life after life, is to help each of us to reach nirvana, the release from the suffering of eternal reincarnation. Quite a load for two laughing madmen dressed in rags to carry? But it is one they bear lightly and more than willingly.

In 1958, only a decade after D. T. Suzuki introduced Zen to enthusiastic crowds of American artists and intellectuals in a series of lectures at Columbia University, Gary Snyder, one of the most influential poets of the Beat Generation, published the first translations of Han Shan's poems into American

English. The Beat's great novelist Jack Kerouac embodied Han Shan in a character based on Snyder himself and further embedded the image of Han Shan in young Americans' hearts and souls, quoting Snyder's translation of Han Shan in his hugely successful novel *The Dharma Bums*. Shih Te, always a sidekick, has tagged along through the centuries.

Wang Fan-chih, the third Zen poet in this selection, created his mordant and sometimes truly funny poetry a couple of centuries after Han Shan, in the outsider tradition founded in China by the mountain sage. Then, as the T'ang dynasty collapsed around them, Wang Fan-chih's complete works, along with a batch of unrelated work labeled with his name, were hidden carefully in a monastic library around the year 1000. They rested there until the beginning of the twentieth century, almost as if they were waiting for another age of urban ghettos and seemingly hopeless poverty, of collapsing empires and visions of apocalyptic change. As these approach, Wang Fan-chih is ready to join his fellow Zen masters in the titanic struggle to save us all from suffering.

In their poems and in the pictures that are so much a part of their tradition, we see Han Shan and Shih Te: always the pair, ragged, yes, but always laughing too—sometimes with pure joy—maybe because they know something wonderful? Sometimes pointedly laughing at themselves, and, more daringly,

sometimes pointedly laughing at the readers' follies, that's mine, and yours too. They wrote their poems on trees, on rocks, on the walls of farmers' homes, and on the walls of the monasteries they sometimes visited, taking menial work, as they did in the kitchen at Kuo-ch'ing Temple, a famous pilgrimage site in the T'ien-t'ai mountains in southeast China. But they didn't observe the monastic discipline, and they were never dependable servants, being drawn to hike off toward a cave on Cold Mountain's side, their true home. There, according to the traditional story, finally cornered by temple officials, Han Shan went into the cave at Cold Cliff and *pulled it shut behind him*, leaving his admirers to collect and hand down more than 350 poems by the two poets.

In fact, though I'll follow the convention of treating them as two individuals, Han Shan and Shih Te are pseudonyms given to several poets who wrote poetry and lived the lives of mountain mystics during the two or three centuries (sixth through eighth) when Zen itself was breaking free of the institutionalized Buddhist churches of T'ang dynasty China and establishing itself as the most Chinese of Buddhism. Zen did this by emphasizing meditation over scriptural study ("Zen" literally means "meditation") and, maybe even more importantly, by incorporating the wisdom and the humor of the great Taoist sages Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu. Han Shan became one of Zen's foremost popular representatives, its central,

independent, layman saint. Though he used the simplest time-honored verse forms, he spoke in a voice with an almost completely new tone. His poetry became the voice of ordinary people, liberating the common sense of the people, and though it was largely ignored by critics and bibliographers, it remains popular among poets and poetry lovers.

The branch of Buddhism that came to China from India was Mahayana, and all Mahayana Buddhist institutions are missionary institutions, in accordance with the vision of the historical Buddha, Gautama Shakyamuni. I believe that the high monks and abbots of Ch'an, as Zen was called in China, saw the poetry of Han Shan and Shih Te for one of the things it certainly was, an outstanding tool for teaching the basic principles of Buddhism. I suspect they intentionally brought the institutional power of their church to the cause of creating a book, a collection of the poems of the two poets, adding to it a few poems of generic Buddhist doctrine and dogma. This collection, with the force of Ch'an and of its ally Pure Land Buddhism behind it in every succeeding dynasty, survived the vicissitudes of time to provide a continuing source of solace and inspiration into the present era.

The tall tale of Han Shan and Shih Te disappearing into the cave is certainly a beguiling one. We are told that several hundred years after Han Shan first started writing his poems on trees and rocks, an imperial Confucian official named Lu-ch'iu Yin (whom

history has provided with two lifetimes, or sets of dates anyway, and maybe even one real official office, though not anywhere near the T'ien-t'ai Range) came along and wrote an account of his own short encounter with the two, by then transmogrified into the bodhisattvas Manjusri (known as Wen-shu in Chinese) and Samantabhadra (known as P'u-hsien). This is the story which has come down to us, in a couple of very similar versions, for more than a thousand years.

Lu-ch'iu Yin's memoir is a neat little essay that appears to tell us just about everything we need to know about both Han Shan and Shih Te. There are two very similar, popular versions. The shorter version comes from the introduction to Han Shan's poems in the *Ch'üan T'ang Shih*, the great collection of T'ang dynasty poems. There are several available in English, including Gary Snyder's from 1958. The following is mine:

Nobody knows where Master Han Shan came from. He lived at Cold Cliff, in the T'ien-t'ai mountains in T'ang-hsing County, sometimes coming in to visit Kuo-ch'ing Temple. He wore a fancy birch-bark hat, a ragged cotton coat, and worn-out sandals. Sometimes he'd sing, or chant verses in the temple porches. Other times he'd sit out at farmers' houses, singing and whistling. No one ever really got to know him.

Lu-ch'iu Yin had received a government appointment in Tan-ch'iu, and when he was just about to debark to take up his post, he happened to run into Feng Kan, who told him he'd just come from the T'ien-t'ai area. Lu-ch'iu Yin asked him if there were any sages there with whom he might study. "There's Han Shan, who is an incarnation of Wen-shu, and Shih Te, who is an incarnation of P'u-hsien. They tend the fires of the kitchens in the granary at Kuo-ch'ing Temple."

The third day after he'd taken up his position, Lu-ch'iu Yin went in person to the temple and, seeing the two men, bowed in appropriate fashion. The two burst out laughing and said, "Oh that Feng Kan, what a tongue-flapping blabbermouth! Amitabha! [*Note the Buddha's name taken in vain as a light oath.*] We can't imagine what you'd be bowing to us for!" And with that they went straight out of the temple, back to Cold Cliff. Master Han Shan disappeared into a cave, and then the cave closed up behind him. It had been his habit to inscribe his poems on bamboo and trees and rocks and cliff faces. Those, along with the ones he wrote on the walls of farmers' homes, inside and out, came to 307. They are collected here in one volume.

There are more than just several problems with this tale, historically speaking. To begin with, the

quasi-narrator, the official Lu-ch'iu Yin, is a person who doesn't exist in any of the dynastic histories. Feng Kan, the Zen master and authority for the authenticity of Han Shan and Shih Te, has existence issues too. The only evidence he ever *was* is this story, and a couple like it in which he's a character. He is known to history solely as the man who told Lu-ch'iu Yin that two Buddhist holy men lived near the county office where he was about to take up his post. Feng Kan is enshrined in the modern biographical dictionary of Buddhist monks as a "tongue wagger" in language that was clearly taken from this story. To put it mildly, Feng Kan is the nearly perfect example of an almost living, breathing fictional character.

If we accept that both Lu-ch'iu Yin and Feng Kan are bogus—though excellent scholars who are brilliant men of goodwill have pursued their shadows in many interesting directions—we can surmise that they are certainly in the introduction for a reason. In history, historical characters sort of have to be included, but in fiction, the characters are created as tools of the narrative. The traditional introduction to the poetry of Han Shan and Shih Te is propaganda. There is enough real poetry attributed to the name Han Shan to substantiate the existence of a historical person (or more likely, persons) we can call Han Shan. The introduction, with its fictional account of Han Shan, tells the readers that Han Shan was a religious seeker, a man called to the life of the religious

hermit, and, finally, a bodhisattva, a person who has achieved supernatural powers rather like a saint in Roman Catholicism, capable of interceding on behalf of suffering humanity.

What can we surmise about the real poet, or poets? We are told that “he lived at Cold Cliff.” The search for an idea of what the real Han Shan was like can begin there. Cold Cliff, or Han Yen, is a real place, a cliff in the T’ien-t’ai mountains in southeast China where hermit seekers had lived for millennia. The earliest of these were Taoists. Then, as Buddhism arrived from the west after the year 100 or so, both Taoists and Buddhists sat there. They found and occupied places where they could weather the winter cold, maybe foraging a little firewood against the worst of it. They dug roots and dried herbs for medicine and for food. Maybe they even planted a few soybeans, though the Taoists generally excluded grains from their diets. And finally, and that was the purpose of it all, they sat in meditation. Every time the word “sit” appears in a poem by Han Shan or Shih Te, it means to sit, cross-legged on the ground or on a simple straw mat, *in meditation*. For the Taoist, it is the “sitting forgetting” that is intended to free him of the memory of words, the memory which separates him from the Tao, which, according to Lao Tzu, cannot be described in words. For the Buddhist, “sitting” refers to the deep mind meditation that is the eighth and final step in the Buddha’s Eightfold Path, the

prescription for getting free of samsara, free of illusion, free of suffering. In Sanskrit, the Indian literary language that is the basis of Mahayana Buddhism, this sort of meditation is called *dhyana*, pronounced *ch'an* in Chinese and *zen* in Japanese. Emphasis on sitting meditation as the source of ultimate enlightenment is one feature of both Taoism and Buddhism that the poems of Han Shan, Shih Te, and Wang Fan-chih all share.

The Lu-ch'iu Yin introduction also tells us that Han Shan lived intentionally on the edges of society and that, like a lot of people who live on its edges (religious seekers, artists of all kinds, even literary translators), Han Shan had what amounts to a day job. The poems show us a man who'd rather be *sitting* or re-creating his insights and inspirations in poetry to share with friends, or, like a bodhisattva, with all sentient beings. But, being a human in a body, Han Shan came from time to time to Kuo-ch'ing Temple to pick up a little work. If you're going to spend time in the hills prospecting for something worth more than gold, you need a grubstake. You need to buy a few supplies, salt and oil, onions, a few pounds of rice. Though stories tell of hermits living on dew and sunlight, they also tell of hermits who pull their caves shut behind them. Those who tried the dew and sunlight diet most likely didn't thrive. So our outsider Han Shan came, when he ran out of grub, to a monastery. On the way in and the way out, except

when being pursued by gawking monks and pilgrims and meddling authorities, he visited with the local farmers. We'll see in the poems that he had a familiar and sympathetic relationship with farmers and farming. He left poems in repayment for their shelter and gifts.

So, despite the exaggerations, the tall tale gives us a pretty realistic picture of a hermit-poet. My personal guess about the real origin of the Han Shan poetry is this: The poetry of the many hermits who lived on Han Shan (Cold Mountain) and Han Yen (Cold Cliff), two real locations in the T'ien-t'ai Range, was becoming famous well before anyone thought to pull all the poems together. The T'ien-t'ai Range was home to many temples and places of pilgrimage, and even today, or again today, cliffs in the area are adorned with poems both brush written and stone incised. Some of the best of the latter are the sources of the rubbings mentioned above. It's quite possible that *Shan Han Shih* (Han Shan's Poems) originally meant the poems written or displayed *at* Han Shan, rather than poems *by* a poet named Han Shan. I doubt anyone will pin Han Shan down any further than he has been at this point, either through good scholarship (the scholars agree that there are at least two Han Shans) or through educated guessing like mine. But there is a little more to be said about the poetry of Han Shan as it has come down to us.

Among these poems are many that appear to come

from the best poetry of mountain hermits of Taoist, Buddhist, and maybe even free-agent mystics, with a sprinkling of more orthodox Buddhist work and some poems on themes appropriate to all three Chinese religions. For, as the Chinese have liked to say for millennia, "The three Ways are one." Among the works of Han Shan, along with the mountain poems, are a few very fine poems of traditional Confucian rural retirement and a few that are modeled on the best of the Taoist epicurean poems. There are also a few poems that fairly unconvincingly claim familiarity with or achievement in the cultural accomplishments of the Confucian, even of military men. Add a few bits of moral exhortation, some of which are very funny and clearly intended to be so, and some of which are not, and you have the Han Shan collection, 307 poems in the Chinese collection and 311 in the Japanese.

If there was something like a conspiracy to package these poems and present them as the work of a bodhisattva, I gratefully accept the gift. If the fractal and chaotic workings of human history (or pure accident, if you prefer) have been the only source of this great collection of poetry, I gratefully accept that miracle as well. My own selection was guided, frankly, almost entirely by my own taste. That is, I translated the poems I like the best, of Han Shan as well as of Shih Te and Wang Fan-chih. I did try to show examples of every type of poem that didn't bore

me or go beyond my personal knowledge of Buddhist philosophy. There aren't many of the last category, not because I'm an expert, but because, essentially, "deep" philosophy, of which there is much in other schools of Buddhism, just isn't a Zen thing, and it certainly is not Han Shan's thing.

Han Shan's name means "Cold Mountain," and many of his poems really are about mountains. Some simply describe the beauty of mountain scenery, with just a hint of perhaps undiscoverable allegory. There are also poems about the hardship of living in the mountains, being almost always cold and almost never not hungry. These are convincing in their realism, and at the same time they suggest the real difficulty of the life of the spiritual seeker: Allegory lives between the lines. Then there are the arrogant challenges thrown in the faces of other climbers: "If your heart were like mine, you'd be here already," an example of the rough rhetoric of the *ma-jen ta-jen* (curse people, smack people) style. These will remind you of certain koans—contemporary, most likely, to many of the Han Shan poems—that became the teaching and learning devices of some schools of modern Zen. That rough style, apparent in Han Shan's response to the official Lu-ch'iu Yin and the monk Feng Kan in the story, is an important feature of many of the poems of all three poets in this collection, but it begins in Han Shan and is certainly most obvious there. Finally, at the tip of Han Shan's

peak, there is the perfect mystical vision. You'll know these poems when you read them, even in my English, I deeply hope. I assure you that some of them would take your breath away if you could read the original Chinese. And, contrary to popular wisdom, it is never too late to learn.

What the best poems share—whether they're about a farmer's life, a poor man's struggles, or a sharp rebuke for anyone who strays from the path of Buddhist morality—what they really share is an attempt at sharpening the readers' awareness of their surroundings and at elevating their view: moral, ethical, political, and spiritual. The best poems are, themselves, mountains for us to climb, maybe to live on for a while, certainly to watch from at least one morning as the sun burns the mist away.

The story of Shih Te is simpler, both in the classical tale and in the poems themselves. In the story, when Han Shan goes into the cave and it closes behind him, Shih Te simply disappears—maybe not from the face of the earth itself like Han Shan, but from the little narrative. He doesn't go with Han Shan; he's just gone. (In his own *Ch'üan T'ang Shih* introduction, he does disappear a little more apparently.) In the longer version of the story, Feng Kan does a little shamanic healing, and Shih Te makes an appearance as a ten-year-old orphaned street urchin, who is discovered along the way to Kuo-ch'ing Temple by Feng

Kan. He grows to maturity as a kitchen worker there. The reference to Shih Te is at least slightly at odds with his description as Han Shan's mountain partner, but I hope I have already established that this narrative is designed as propaganda, and consistency isn't a necessary part of that process.

I believe that in fact Shih Te is the pseudonym of a group of later poets. A little voice tells me that many disciples of Han Shan, or admirers of his style, might have, out of respect for the master, written anonymous poems and left them, like Han Shan, on trees and on rocks among the T'ien-t'ai ridges and crags. Maybe they just added them to the manuscript as it passed through their hands, copying or having it copied to pass on to poetry-loving friends. During the entire T'ang dynasty, all written works were created, copied, and circulated in manuscript, in handwriting. Printing wasn't put into general use until after the year 1000. The reputation of Tu Fu, for example, for nearly a thousand years considered the greatest of the great among Chinese poets, took a couple of centuries to fully blossom. Han Shan's fame, like Tu Fu's, spread not so much by word of mouth as by word of hand.

After "Han Shan" began to be recognized as the name of a person, I'm supposing that the same sort of admirers who would previously have simply added a poem while copying the manuscript to pass on, now wrote poems using the more humble pseudonym of Shih Te (which simply means something like "the Orphan"). I

think that these later poets might have identified themselves not as the master himself, but as his spiritual adopted children. Only one Shih Te poem mentions Han Shan directly, but many are clearly imitations of specific Han Shan poems. Quite a few, like the later poems in the Han Shan collection, fall into the category I'd call propagandistic filler. The Shih Te poets don't appear to have included any mystics, but several of the poems are as funny and as imaginative as anything of Han Shan's, and I think you'll find them fun to read. By the usual count, there are only forty-nine extant poems by Shih Te, and I've chosen to translate just twenty.

After the T'ang many well-known poets wrote poems in the manner of Han Shan, signing them with their own names but attributing the inspiration to Han Shan. I don't know of anyone who so honored the humble orphan poet except two Zen masters, the famous and powerful Ch'an abbot Ch'u Shih of the Yuan dynasty and an anonymous Ming master who called himself for this purpose Shih Shu ("Rocks and Trees"). Both of these poets wrote lockstep harmony poems (poems written using the same words in the rhyming positions in the poems as had Han Shan) with a poem for every single one of Han Shan's collected poems. They also wrote a harmony poem for each of Shih Te's, and even for the two extant poems by Feng Kan.

The poems attributed to Wang Fan-chih have a history that is different from those of the two mountain

masters. These poems were popular among urban folk of the late T'ang, a period when the dynasty was gasping itself away in paroxysms of famine, pestilence, and war. Fewer than a dozen of his poems survive, having been cited by mainstream poets in their own collections of favorites. Like Han Shan and Shih Te, the men themselves, the majority of Wang Fan-chih's poems were sealed away in a cave, in this case in the caverns of the great Buddhist-Taoist monastic library at Tun-huang, on the eastern end of the Silk Road, around the year 1000, when Chinese forces were clearly losing control of the region. The cavern was only reopened in the early years of the twentieth century, and Wang Fan-chih's poems weren't looked at closely by Westerners until after 1950.

The complete translation of the more than three scrolls attributed to Wang Fan-chih, into clear and unpretentious scholarly French by the great Sinologist Paul Demiéville, reveals that everything from radical political statements to Buddhist elementary school copybook morality verses had been stuck together under the Wang Fan-chih label. No more than ten poems by Wang Fan-chih have ever previously been translated into English. When I first looked at the originals of these poems, I was surprised. This poet is, like Han Shan and Shih Te, one who has been constructed from a group of anonymous poets, in Wang Fan-chih's case clearly mainly poets of the late T'ang. There is a lot of trash in the Wang Fan-chih

collection, but there are maybe fifty or sixty poems that were really exciting to discover. Digging through the collection for the good ones made me appreciate Han Shan's editors for the first time. Wang Fan-chih's themes include the familiar Buddhist-Taoist eclectic mix, and I don't doubt that Han Shan and Shih Te would have understood and appreciated the poet's motives, or his poems. Some few are brilliant, even though the poets whom this pseudonym gathers together were certainly poorly educated. Some of the best poems, indeed, appear to be almost what we'd call graffiti, and I can see guerilla artists splashing these short and combative poems on walls in the dead of night.

While Han Shan and Shih Te sometimes tell tales of poverty and suffering as well, Wang Fan-chih's life was lived in a time of true cultural fugue, and many of his poems reflect terrible human suffering, felt or observed, that goes far beyond anything we see in the work of the earlier poets. They had chosen something like voluntary poverty in the most beautiful of surroundings. Wang Fan-chih dwells with rats in the midst of pestilence and starvation.

Wang Fan-chih's name means simply, "Mr. Wang, a Buddhist layman." While he may seem cynical, and he can certainly be cruelly witty, his motive is always a Buddhist's, namely to save sentient beings from suffering. His poems concentrate on proving the first of the Buddha's Four Noble Truths, that "life

is suffering,” and so the poetry is often morbid, even macabre. He’s always ready to puncture hypocritical public displays of piety, and he’s always ready to point at the absolute material truth of death and the pointlessness of pride or of the accumulation of material possessions. He seems an angry man, even a political rebel, and it is harder to see his displays of anger as rhetorical—made to make a moral point—than it is for similar outbursts in the poetry of Han Shan or Shih Te. Acceptance of the first of the Four Noble Truths is the absolutely necessary first step in the Buddha’s Way, a way providing eight steps that are chosen solely for the purpose of releasing human-kind from that suffering. Mr. Wang is happy to rub his readers’ faces in the mud, and not afraid to add in a measure of shit and piss to the recipe in his effort to get self-satisfied, greedy folks like us to see his point. His voice sometimes seems like an Old Testament prophet’s, though his solution to the suffering caused by the impermanence and injustice of human life in the world involves no deity. But he can also display the salving humor of a saint, mocking his own grinding poverty as he prepares for a guest by scraping together a “chair” from the dirt of an earthen floor.

I originally planned to add only a few of Wang Fan-chih’s poems to this book, to help to broaden most readers’ view of what Buddhism was in the T’ang and show what it is or can be in an urbanized world. The book has ended up with more of Wang Fan-chih’s

poems than Shih Te's because, while Shih Te offers a valuable and enjoyable reprise of Han Shan's ideas, it seems to me the lay Buddhist Wang Fan-chih's poetry shows that the tradition of the outsider, the free agent and the free spirit, initiated by Han Shan and Shih Te, was alive and scuffling in the cruel streets of a failing society. It seems particularly ripe for reincarnation in this century.

Beneath the morning mist on the mountainside or the dust of the mundane activities of city streets, these poets have hidden some of the way they have found, some of the truth of the light. They may *appear* to have hidden these things simply because words can do no more than give a glimmer of the light of the spirit; but poets think, I think, that a poem can do more than "mere words" can. A well-made poem may give us aid when we are ready, or if, *if* we are willing to study, *if* we will work, *if* we move on to meditate. With the aid of the well-made poem, we may, finally, discover the light on the mountain, in, through, or behind the obscuring mist, or rising, far, far off, above the dust of the city streets, so that the sun and the moon of *their* enlightenment may become the light of *our own* revelations. The poems of these three poets are, if we choose to let them be, no more, and no less, than fingers pointing. The Way will be what is revealed, and the beauty of what is revealed may help to draw us, as seekers, on through arduous

meditation, on through the arduous and sometimes dangerous mountain climb. But as Shih Te says,

My poems are poems,
even if *some people* call them sermons.
Well, poems and sermons do share one thing;
when you read them you got to be careful.
Keep at it. Get into detail.
Don't just claim they're easy.
If you were to live your *life* like that,
a lot of funny things might happen.

PART ONE

Cold Mountain

Poems of Master Han Shan

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I

Ranges, ridges, daunting cliffs, I chose this place
with divination's aid.

The road's for the birds, no man tracks there.

And what is the yard? White clouds clothe

dark stone. I lived here years, watching

springs with The Great Change become winter.

Here's a word for the rich folks with cauldrons and
bells:

Fame's empty, no good, *that's* for sure.

II

Cold Mountain Road's a joke,

no cart track, no horse trail.

Creeks like veins, but still it's hard to mark

the twists. Fields and fields of crags for crops,

it's hard to say how many.

Tears of dew upon a thousand kinds of grasses;

the wind sings best in one kind of pine.

And now I've lost my way again:

Body asking shadow, "Which way from here?"

III

If you're looking for a peaceful place,
Cold Mountain's always a refuge.
A little breeze, breath of the shaded pines,
and if you listen close, the music's even better.
Under the pines a graying man,
soft, soothingly, reading aloud from Lao Tzu.

IV

My mind's the autumn moon,
shining in the blue-green pool,
reflecting glistening, clear and pure . . .
There's nothing to compare it to,
what else can I say?

V

In the city, the moth-browed girl,
her jade pendants like tiny wind chimes chiming.
She is playing with a parrot in the flowers;
she is playing on her *p'i-p'a* in the moonlight.
Her songs will echo for three months;
a little dance will draw ten thousand watchers.
Nothing lasts as long as this:
beautiful face of the hibiscus,
can't bear the frost's caress.

VI

I always wanted to go to East Cliff,
more years than I can remember,
until today I just grabbed a vine
and started up. Halfway up
wind and a heavy mist closed in,
and the narrow path tugged at my shirt:
it was hard to get on. The slickery
mud under the moss on the rocks
gave way, and I couldn't keep going.
So here I stay, under this cinnamon tree,
white clouds for my pillow,
I'll just take a nap.

VII

I sit beneath the cliff, quiet and alone.
Round moon in the middle of the sky's a bird
 ablaze:
all things are seen mere shadows in its brilliance,
that single wheel of perfect light . . .
Alone, its spirit naturally comes clear.
Swallowed in emptiness in this cave of darkest
 mystery,
because of the finger pointing, I saw the moon.
That moon became the pivot of my heart.

VIII

Master of the sword and brush,
I met three brilliant and virtuous rulers.
In the East they got my letters,
but they were not pleased.
In the West I strove
in battles for them,
but all to no reward.
Mastered the brush and mastered the sword . . .
Today? I'm old of a sudden . . .
What's left of my life is not worth a word.

IX

People ask about the Cold Mountain way:
plain roads don't get through to Cold Mountain.
Middle of the summer, and the ice still hasn't
 melted.
Sunrise, and the mist would blind a hidden dragon.
So, how could a man like *me* get *here*?
My heart is not the same as yours, *dear sir* . . .
If your heart were like mine,
you'd be here already.

X

Parrots live in the Western Lands;
forest huntsmen net them, bring them here.
Courtesans love to play with them, and so
they are well known at Court, in and out all day.
They're given golden cages to dwell in,
but bolted in, their robes of plumes are ruined.
Better a swan, or a crane . . .
riding the winds high up, well known
to the clouds where they fly.

XI

My father and mother were frugal, hard workers.
The grain fields, the vegetable plots,
they left me are as good as any man's.
My wife keeps the loom click-clacking,
and my boy can goo-goo with the best.
I just clap time for the flowers as they dance,
or sit chin in hand and listen to the birds sing.
And who should come by from time to time
to sigh their admiration? The woodcutters
quite often do!

XII

Since I came to dwell up on Cold Mountain
how many ten thousands of years have gone by . . .
Accepting chance and change, I hid away by a
 spring in a grove;
perched there, just watching, I was satisfied.
Not many come, out among these cliffs,
but white clouds sometimes touch, and pass . . .
Soft grass to lie down on,
blue sky for covers.
Pillowed on a rock. Happy, alive.
I'll let Heaven and Earth take care of the changes.

XIII

There is a man who makes a meal of rosy clouds:
where he dwells the crowds don't ramble.
Any season is just fine with him,
the summer just like the fall.
In a dark ravine a tiny rill drips, keeping time,
and up in the pines the wind's always sighing.
Sit *there* in meditation, half a day,
a hundred autumns' grief will drop away.

XIV

Oh Wise Gentlemen, ignore me!
Like I ignore you fools.
I'm not stupid, I'm not wise,
from now on I'm just gone.
Into the night, singing in moonlight,
into the dawn, dancing with white clouds.
That's the way to occupy your hands and mouth!
I can't just sit still while my hair grows!

XV

Thatch on rafters, I live in the wilds.
Carts and horses that pass here are few.
The grove is quiet, a place birds flock:
the creek is deep, so fish wait there.
There are wild fruits the boy and I can pick,
hard rocky fields the wife and I will hoe.
And in the house, what else?
Just a single shelf of books.

XVI

Set foot on Han Shan's Way?
Han Shan's road is endless . . .
The gorge is long. Rocks, and rocks and rocks,
 jut up.
The torrent's wide, reeds almost hide the far side.
The moss is slippery even without rain.
The pines sing: the wind is real enough.
Who's ready to leap free of the world's traces
to come to sit with me among white clouds?

XVII

My old landlady
got rich a couple years ago.
Used to be poorer than me.
Now she laughs that I don't have money.
She laughs that I've fallen behind.
I laugh that she's gotten ahead.
Both of us laughing, no stopping us.
Lady of the Land, and the Lord of the West.

XVIII

I once met, face to face,
a scholar, a truly brilliant man,
perfect in his erudition, sparkling, shocking,
a mind beyond compare.
Chosen by examination, his name was bruited on high,
even his quatrains were better than all other men's.
Once in office his decisions were beyond
the finest cases of all the Ancient Sages.
He would travel in no other's dust.
Then of sudden his heart, his nature, flagged and burned.
Wealth and honor? Cowries are cunts, and money too . . .
Strung together they can be read, "nobility."
When roof tiles are shattered, and ice melts away . . .
What is there? What is there left to say.

XIX

The white crane flew with a bitter-flavored blossom,
resting just once in a thousand *li*.
He wanted to fly to P'englai Island,
where all the fairies dwell,
with only that flower to eat on the way.
First his feathers began to fall,
then far from the flock his heart fell too.
How he wished for his old nest,
but his wife and his boy never knew.

XX

I'm used to living in some hidden, shaded,
mountain place,
but once in a while I walk straight into the
Kuo-ch'ing Temple,
and sometimes I pay a call on old Feng Kan,
or go to see that honorable sir, Shih Te, the
foundling.
But then I come home, alone, to my cold cliff.
No one's talk makes perfect harmony with mine.
I search a stream that has no source.
The spring dried up, but the stream water's still
flowing.

XXI

If you'd been too stupid, greedy, last time through,
you wouldn't know your heart right now.
If you're poor today,
it's likely because of what you did before.
If you don't try in *this* life,
the life to come will be the life of old.
There's no ferry upon *either* shore,
but though it's mighty hard to see the way,
yet you will cross.

XXII

When you've got wine, invite folks in to drink.
If you get meat, invite them in for a meal!
The Yellow Springs wait for every man,
yet the young and strong must be hard workers.
The girdle of jade is just a flower;
gold pins are not the eternal jewel.
Old man Chang, old lady Cheng?
Haven't been seen, or heard from, lately.

XXIII

The peach would pass the summer blooming,
but wind and moon cannot be made to wait.

I've looked around for men of the Han,
and, can it be, there isn't one . . .

Morning after morning, one dynasty, another,
the flowers keep on falling . . .

Year by year the harvest's men:
they change, and then they're gone.

Here, where the heat of the sun stirs the dust,
another day there was an ocean.

XXIV

Fields, a house, many mulberry trees, fine gardens!
Oxen and calves fill his stables and his

well-trodden roads.

He knows for sure from all this that all effects have
causes,

and that only fools buy early and sell late.

So his eyes can see too how it could all get gone,
ground down, melted, all away . . .

These things can knock on the heads of everyone
living,

like the Abbot's knock on the noggin of the errant
novice.

You can end up in paper pants, or worse, with
a broken tile, pierced and hung on a thong
flip-flapping over your private parts . . .

and sure as sure, you'll end up dead,
maybe starved or frozen, but certainly dead.

XXV

I once saw a huge pack of dogs,
scruffy, mangy, maybe so,
but they slept where they pleased,
and waking, ran romping.
But throw them a bone?
It was war in the street . . .
Maybe it's a good thing bones are rare:
but until there's enough, no creature will share.

XXVI

Vast, vast the living waters, the Yellow River flows,
eastward always, ever unceasing . . .
and long as you look, in time or space,
you'll never see it clear.
Every human lifetime has its end.
So, would you rise and ride the white clouds?
How are your wings to grow?
Only start while your hair's still black,
and dwelling or moving, strive.

XXVII

Every single thing has uses;
when you use it, use it right.
Use it the way it's not intended,
first it wanes and then it drains!
A round hole for a square handle
is pretty sad, just an empty failure.
The most glorious warhorse ever sat
can't match a crippled kitty
in a race to catch a rat.

XXVIII

Pigs eat dead man meat.
Folks eat dead pig guts.
Pigs don't mind man-stink.
People even say cooked pig smells good,
but if a *pig* dies, people heave it in the river,
and when a *man* dies, he's buried, out of sight.
Then both pigs and men just have to do without.
*But the pure white lotus of the Buddha
is born and lives, in boiling water.*

XXIX

Happy? That was old Huntun . . .
Never got hungry, never even took a piss,
until he ran into those grateful friends (those fools)
who drilled the seven holes in him.
Up in the morning, work all day
just to get our food and clothes:
harvesting enough to pay our rent and taxes.
A thousand hands after just one coin . . .
All together shout it out now: *Run for your life!*

XXX

There's one sort of dolt in this world,
lost, lost, with the heart of an ass.
Although he maybe can talk like a human,
for lust and for greed he's a pig's equal . . .
Dangerous, crooked, and so hard to figure . . .
He sounds real smooth, but it's *always* a lie.
If you can bear to have words with this creature,
tell him, "You can't stay here!"

XXXI

His family name, Most-Arrogant Slave-at-Heart,
first name's Luster, middle name's Liar.
Not a speck of understanding in this *thing*,
and no work in the world he'll be honest at . . .
Death he fears like a bitter herb;
life he gobbles like honey.
Eats fish, lusts after it, and worse,
there's no dog at a bone like him
on the flesh of a sentient being.

XXXII

Divining gave me this hidden dwelling place:
T'ien-t'ai, it said, and no more.
Gibbons shriek; the mist in the ravine is freezing.
Mountain colors, run straight up to my grass gate.
I've dressed a pine in leaves. That's my fancy hall.
I've cleaned out the pool and channeled the spring.
Sweet, to let the world go.
Ferns, I'll harvest, to live out the years left.

XXXIII

Green water in the stream in the pass,
white water risen from the clear-welling spring . . .
Han Shan's moon's a flower, white as well . . .
So the darkest secret, the spirit by itself illumines:
gaze into the emptiness: to the ends of the earth . . .
You're alone, with *all* within.

XXXIV

I have all the vestment I will ever need,
not gauzy silk nor twill,
and if you ask about the color,
neither red, nor purple . . .
In the summer it's light as wings;
in the winter it's my quilt.
Winter or summer, of use in both . . .
Year upon year, just this.

XXXV

White whisk, sandalwood, the handle,
with a natural fragrance that lasts sun's rise to fall.
The whisk itself is soft as rolling mist,
turning, when it's brandished, like a rank of clouds.
Its lightness fits it to the rites of summer,
raised high, then flicking in the dust.
Day after day and season into season,
inside the master's cell . . .
It has pointed many a lost man well upon his way.

XXXVI

Lust, or love; some grasp at it for happiness,
but only calamity dwells within the mortal shell,
and thus they march through fire toward a bright
mirage,
to find all love inconstant; the dying body . . .
A real man's one ambition is to be as straight as
steel.
In the heart that is not twisted,
the Tao's a road that runs straight through.
Close-growing, see the bamboo *bend* beneath the
snow,
and know it cannot be in vain to spend the spirit so.

XXXVII

Some folks point to the sharp-tanged spring-tree
and claim it's the fragrant, sacred sandalwood . . .
As grains of sand are the multitudes
who've sought the way like this.
They've tried to *lead* the Way so too.
How many, though, of any of these
have ever reached *nirvana*?
They throw out the gold and haul away the straw.
But fooling other folks, they've fooled themselves.
On a pathway made of sand,
it's hard to make a mud ball.

XXXVIII

Long on the road, *poor scholar*!
Cold and hungry, to and from the poles . . .
Free, retired, in love, with writing poems,
scratch, scratch, with all your heart!
But who'd even *pick up* a *poor boy's* poems?
I beg you, sir, please stop your moaning.
If you wrote your poems on fat rice balls,
even a beggar's dog wouldn't eat 'em.

XXXIX

I seek in my mind for the days of my youth,
when I rode to the hunt at Ping-ling.
Imperial envoy was a post far beneath me,
nor would I have wanted an Immortal's fame!
From a winged steed, my white stallion,
I loosed falcons upon hares . . .
Unconscious, I was, as the *now* stooped to conquer.
Yet who in all the world, besides myself,
could judge me one worth pity!

XL

Rich men's sons convened in a high hall,
with flowering lanterns brilliant as a reigning Lord,
when a man without even a candle
crept in for a piece of their light . . .
Who'd ever think they'd chase him off,
home to his treasure-house there in his darkness.
Would one more man reduce their light?
Monstrous, to begrudge a ray!

XLI

A scroll full of poems by poets of talent,
and big pot full of wine fit for saints.
I love to walk out to watch the young bull calves;
sitting, I'd rather stay close to home.
Frost and dew can soak through thatch,
but the moon flowers white
through the window made of old bottles;
I'm poor, but I can build more windows now,
a couple more cups, to go
with the chanting of two or three new poems.

XLII

It ought to be a hot spot, that tavern . . .
The brew's rich and strong;
bright pennants fly above to brag
that they offer full measure.
So how come they're not selling?
The joint is full of grinning dogs.
A kid comes in to grab a drink . . .
Dogs growl: he's gone.

XLIII

In the month too hot for working in the fields,
every man's good to share a drink with.
So I lay out all kinds of mountain fruits
with a wall of wine cups to guard 'em,
with rushes laid out for a mat,
and big banana leaves for plates.
When you're drunk, and settled there, propped up,
Great Mount Sumeru's just a little stick.

XLIV

Cloudy mountains, field on field, run straight up
the sky.
Bad road, deep woods, not many wander here for
pleasure.
Far off I see the moon-toad, shining, shining, bright.
Just here, I hear a flock of birds, all talking of the
autumn.
The old man sits, perched on a high green ridge,
living alone in this little mansion, in charge of his
hair growing white.
It's sad, yes, the way the years move on, and today,
heartless, *they're* going home,
endless, the eastward-flowing stream.

XLV

This year's crop isn't ripe yet.
Last year's grain's all gone.
So out I go to beg a peck;
outside the gate, I was on one foot, then the other.
The husband came out and said, "Best ask my wife."
The wife came out and said, "Ask the old man."
Hearts hard as that . . .
Wealth itself is a great misfortune.

XLVI

A handsome face, that fine young man,
and deep his knowledge of the Classics and the
Histories.
All call him *Elder*,
all grant him the title of Scholar . . .
But he doesn't have a post yet . . .
and he has no knowledge of planting and reaping.
Winter's here. All he owns is the ragged cloak
he uses to cover his books, not himself.

XLVII

I was born just thirty years ago,
but I've wandered a million miles already.
Along the River through the green grass on the
banks,
out to the borderlands, where the red dust roils.
Chewed herbs, cooked up alchemical elixirs,
trying to become an Immortal.
Read all the Writings, chanted the Histories
aloud,
trying to learn them all by heart . . .
Today I'm on my way
home to Cold Mountain.
There, I'll bed down in the creek, just to wash out
my ears.

XLVIII

Talking about my generation:

So many *busy* men,
broad in their educations, broad their views,
but they don't know a thing about their very own
natures,
and they wander way off the Way.
If they really saw what's real,
why would they offer us stale empty dreams?
In the single mantra, now, the heart,
you learn to know your own,
seeing what the Buddha sees.

XLIX

The birds at play: when I can't stand them
any longer,

I go sleep in my thatched hut.

The cherries in the trees glow bright
as the tips of burning incense,
and the willow branches sway.

Sun runs up green ridges.

Sunlit clouds wash in the green pool.

Everybody knows: if you want out of the dust,
head up the south side of Cold Mountain.

L

These days you might meet a man,
heart missing, dumb as a plank . . .
When he talks, nothing you can understand
comes out
of his mouth, except when he says, "I don't care."
Ask him the Way, "There ain't no way";
ask about the Buddha, he just says don't ask.
Question him carefully, get into detail;
deep, vast, and empty is this slough of despond . . .

LI

Who is that man,
whom all despise?
His poor, stupid heart
gone silly with anger,
meat-eye drunk blind.
When he sees a Buddha, he doesn't bow . . .
When he sees a monk, he gives no alms . . .
The butcher hacks out the biggest cuts,
but beyond that, he has no other talent . . .

LII

When the stupidest folks read my poems,
they snort in incomprehension . . .
When the middling sort read my poems,
they think them over and pronounce them deep . . .
When a sage reads a poem of mine,
his face breaks into a great big smile.
When the great Yang Hsiu saw the
young woman, in an instant,
he understood the mystery!

LIII

There are some folks who're strict and straight,
but I'm not in the strict and straight cart.
Plain clothes making dancing easy,
and when the wine is gone you can
be drunk of singing!
Go for a full belly,
but don't wear your legs out looking for lunch . . .
When the weeds grow out of your eye sockets,
you'll rue that day . . .

LIV

Sun's yang light failing, down the Western Peak;
the grasses caught the light, and flowered with it.
And again, the dark came on, moon waiting like a
hidden dragon,
among the intertwining branches of vine-covered
pines.

Here, just here, a tiger waited,
bristling, hackles up, to meet me.
Not a pen knife in my hand,
I tried, I tried to know no fear,
but my heart was all ears, all ears.

LV

Once we start our work, it's heart in hand;
all that's to be done to serve these folks
is more than even a strong man can handle.
There's no way to avoid the dirty work,
so let us go and make our visits,
just yesterday to mourn Hsü Wu,
today to see Liu San to the graveside.
Day after day, no rest,
sad, and harried as a housewife.

LVI

If pleasure comes, enjoy it.
Time's never an arrow to let miss the mark . . .
We talk like we'll live to a hundred,
but who'll ever even get close?
Living in this world: just grasp a handful . . .
And *money*? That's a word the autumn crickets
choke on.
In the final chapter of the *Classic of Dutiful
Children*,
we all learn the proprieties of burying our elders.

LVII

Sitting alone now, my mind's always flagging,
suddenly
heart and mind, somehow, somewhere far off.
The clouds move so slow at the mountain's waist.
The fragrance of the valley rides sighing on the
breeze.
Gibbons come so mild and languorous into the
trees,
and the birds sing sad of autumn in the grove.
Time rushes, and the little hairs stand up;
so many harvests all used up; an old man's heart
just turns, and turns again.

LVIII

“Take a saint for a friend,” said P’u-shang,
“but if he’s not a saint, let that be the end of it.”

“If you are good, you’ll find others so;
if not, then, maybe no,” said Tzu-chang,
and then went on,
“Praise the skilled; console those without it;
good men will surround you.”

Follow the fine strong words of Tzu-chang . . .
Reject the selfish P’u-shang’s petty drivels.

LIX

Han Shan has so many strange, well-hidden sights,
Every climber climbs a little timidly . . .
Moon shines in the dripping water;
wind brings the very grass alive.
Freezing trees flower with snow,
dead, bare trees leafed out in cloud.
Gored by cold rain, the liveliest soul turns away.
Unless it stays sunny, you’ll never get through.

LX

There's a single tree here, twice as old
as the grove that grows, to reckon true.
It's roots have answered every insult
that the mounds and channels
of the changing earth could give,
and its leaves have given way to wind and frost.
People laugh at the gnarled remains,
never thinking of the complex beauty of the grain
within.
Let the skin and flesh fall free . . .
What's true, what's real, is there, inside.

LXI

There's a naked worm up on Cold Mountain,
body white, head black,
with two books in its hands.
One's *The Way*, and the other is *The Power*.
He has no ax, no fires at home,
no knapsack for the road.
But he always holds the *Sword of Wisdom*,
to cut down every thief of peace.

LXII

Oh I've been poor before, for sure . . .
But today, I'm broke, and cold.
Whatever I've tried hasn't worked like I planned,
and the ways that I went left me lost
in the mud, and my boots sunk in over their tops . . .
On festival days, when the food is for free,
it's just a full bellyache for me.
Since I lost that pretty cat,
the rats have my pot under siege.

LXIII

My home's a hole,
and a hole's where *nothing* is.
Pure, clean, emptiness, to venerate . . .
A blazing flower of brightness, sun oh sun . . .
Food? Wild plants will make this meager body
maigre feast,
and a cotton robe's enough to robe illusion . . .
Bring all your thousands of Sages, all sorts, here to
meet me,
what's left of me, and the Heavenly Buddha!

LXIV

Idle, I wander to the very top of Flowering Peak,
so fresh, so bright, the daylight blazing, all adazzle.
Look around! The sunlight in the emptiness!
And white clouds, or are they white cranes, flying.

LXV

Since I came to Cold Mountain,
I've fed my destiny on mountain fruits.
What cares could there be in an ordinary life?
I'll simply follow mine through . . .
Sun and moon move like a river,
light and dark; just sparks from stone.
I give *you* charge of all that changes, earth and sky.
I am become the pivot,
here *sitting* on this cliff.

LXVI

Here, where I've come to perch,
are many deep, mysterious places
men seldom speak of.
No wind, and yet the vines sway;
No mist, but the bamboo groves
seem somehow always dusky.
Who is it that the stream sobs for,
or for whom do the mountain's clouds stand
suddenly like pennants at attention?
At noon, when I meditate inside my tent,
I find the sun on my horizon.

LXVII

How many T'ien-t'ai monks,
don't recognize the Master of Cold Mountain,
don't really know where it's at, at all,
and just make up idle nonsense?

LXVIII

Living on Cold Mountain, I got free of the world,
Not even a mantra hung on my heart.

Maybe a line of a poem might get scribbled on a
rock wall.

Me, drifting *home*, like the unmoored boat.

LXIX

It's sad, this old place;
one side's collapsing, while the other just totters,
walls falling outward, away from the center,
the binding beams and rafters, just a pile of sticks
now.

Roof tiles heaped like fallen leaves.

It's rot, just a matter of time . . .

Leave it to the wind to bring it all down.

Raising the fallen is harder.

LXX

They laugh at me, "Hey farm boy!
Skinny head, your hat's not tall enough,
and your belt goes around you twice!"
It's not that I don't know what's in . . .
If you don't have the cash, forget it.
But someday I'll get rich for sure,
and then I'll wear a big, tall
Buddhist gravestone on my head.

LXXI

Live a whole life without running around,
without righteousness or compassion.

Words branch and leaf; the heart embraces
both lies and betrayals.

Clear just a little path,
you may make of *your own life* a Great Falsehood.

It's lies that offer a ladder to the clouds . . .
and liars that whittle it to splinters.

LXXII

I've lived here a long time. How many autumns?
Singing silly songs, with *absolutely* not one care!
Chewing a nice medicinal poem when I get
 hungry . . .
Mind grinding the rhymes and meter smooth
as I lean against a stone.

LXXIII

All those stars set out in order bright in the night's
 deep.
Dark on the cliff, the orphan lamp, moon not set
 yet . . .
Perfectly round, that bright mirror no one needs to
 polish,
hanging there in the clear air: it's my heart.

LXXIV

Old, sick, last years, hundred and some so far.
Brown, my face, and white my hair,
I love living on the mountain.
Cloth robe wrapped round me,
I accept what's coming to me . . .
How could I try to imitate
this world's vain schemers?

LXXV

Do I have a self or not, or is there one at all?
A right me, oh my belly, or, perhaps again, a wrong
one!
Shall I go right on thinking just like this,
or go back and sit in meditation on the cliff,
green grass growing up between my feet
and the red dust dropping on my head?
All the while the common folk
think I'm a saint:
laying fruit and wine around me,
as if to decorate my bier.

LXXVI

Yesterday I saw trees on the river banks.
Battered! It was hard to believe.
Two or three trunks like poles,
chopped by axes, skinned by blades . . .
Frost had yellowed, then stripped, their leaves.
Even the roots were battered in the flow . . .
Wherever there's life
 things like this happen.
Shall I blame the power of Heaven?
Shall I blame the power of Earth?

LXXVII

The ancients wrote poems on the rocks here a
thousand years ago.
The empty air beyond the towering cliff's its
punctuation.
When the moon shines, the brightness writes its
purity.
No need to trouble anyone by asking, East or West!

LXXVIII

Most of us are born with this disease . . .
a taste that never wavers:
piglets, steamed, with garlic sauce,
roast duck with a dash of pepper,
or minced raw fish,
or maybe pig's cheeks fried skin-on.
Don't care how bitter someone else's life might be,
as long as yours is sweet and greasy.

LXXIX

How can reading a book keep you from dying?
How can reading a book keep you from being poor?
So why all this love of learning? To read,
as if loving to read made you better than others?
Just this: real humans, if they don't love learning,
where shall they find peace for this body?
Bitter herbs are the best medicine,
but they are hard to swallow . . .
Try some garlic sauce. That'll help you get it down.

LXXX

I see men who'd deceive other men:
running with a basket of water in their hands.
Though they get home in the space of a breath,
what have they left when they get there?
And I see the deceived:
like bunching onions in the garden,
cut and cut and cut again each day,
yet something of Heaven's always grows back there.

LXXXI

Sometimes from down below
I catch the flash of the stream's flow.
Sometimes I sit like a stone on the cliff.
My heart is like the orphan cloud,
with nothing to lean on,
so far, so far away,
what of the world's could sway it?

LXXXII

My life's grown from old roots on Cold Mountain,
on the stone cliffs, perched, heart breathing free.
At the end no mere image ever leaves scars:
I'm settled in to watch this universe flow by.
Time's light and shadows rise, a flutter of brilliance,
shining where my heart dwells.
Being, and nothingness, one dharma before me.
The tool *I* use shines from the Pearl of Wisdom.
When you know the use of the method
that is no method at all, then every single place
is *perfect*.

LXXXIII

When people meet Han Shan,
they all say he's crazy,
face not worth a second look,
body wrapped in rags . . .
They haven't got a clue when I start talking;
I wouldn't *say* what they say.
But I leave this message for those who
come looking for me:
"You could try to make it to Cold Mountain."

LXXXIV

To wander free among the mountains,
you don't have to *buy* them.
For a steep climb you need a stout staff,
and a good strong vine helps when it's steeper.
The pines beside the creeks are always green,
but the rocks in their beds come in all colors.
You might get cut off from all your friends,
but in the spring the birds will sing for you.

LXXXV

I enjoy it, like music, the simple path of my
 everyday life,
vines in the mist, cave in stone, beside the stream.
I love the wild places, broad sunny ways to wander,
free as the white clouds, my companions.
There is a road, but it doesn't go to town.
Heartless, you may find it.
On a stone bed, alone, night sitting,
full moon rising on Cold Mountain.

LXXXVI

I can see the top of T'ien-t'ai,
alone above the others.
The wind that moves them, gives
rhyme to pine and bamboo.
Moon's in the rhythm
of the sea, its tides.
Look down,
green of the mountains spreads forever.
Talk of mystery! Watch the white clouds!
Loving nature, you love mountains and water, for
sure:
It's at the root of every human's way:
as sunset is the turning of the Tao.

LXXXVII

Why's my heart always, always spinning?
A human's life is just a mushroom's life, finished in
 a morning.
How to bear that in two decades at the most
my family, all my friends, will be gone cold and
 fallen down.
These thoughts weigh on my heart, and so of course
 I grieve,
a grief like love, unbearable.
What to do, what should I do?
Take this body home
into my mountain shade.

LXXXVIII

There are men these days seek a road to the clouds,
cloud roads, dark and trackless.

Mountains are high with many dangerous crags,
green crags above, and down below as well.

And cloud roads, where are they?

Cloud roads are empty; cloud roads are in empty
space.

LXXXIX

Sat on the cliff today,
sat so long the mist burned off.

Like a road the stream was, clear at its mouth,
a long time searching from a green crag top.

White clouds cast clear shadows in the silence,
light of the moon still floats, lingering.

No dust, no dirt on me,
how could this heart hold *grief*?

XC

Among a thousand clouds, ten thousand streams,
there is one idle *man*.

In the white sunlight
he rambles the green mountainside,
goes home at night to sleep below the cliff.
Watching the springs and the autumns pass
sequestered, for sure, but pure,
and owing aught to anyone.
Happy? Depending on no one.
Quiet as the autumn river, flowing.

XCI

High, high, on top of the tip of the peak,
look all around as far as you can see, no end.
I sit by myself, and no one knows,
orphan moon reflecting from Cold Spring.
There is no moon in the spring,
moon's white's in the sky.
I hum this into a little tune,
a little tune without any Zen.

XCII

I live in a village in the countryside,
without a father or a mother.
With no name, no rank in my clan.
Some people will call me old name.
Some people call me another.
No one is my teacher:
I'm just a poor low creature like many another.
But I know myself. I'm real,
and my heart is the Diamond.

XCIII

Han Shan spits out these words,
words no one believes . . .
Honey's sweet, so people love it,
But the best herbs are bitter, hard to get down.
Go along, and they'll all love you.
Oppose them, and you'll get a big-eyed stare.
All I see is wooden puppets,
playing out their melodrama.

XCIV

It's been a long time since I passed through this
place.

Today, I'm here again, after seventy years.

Of those who wandered by back then,
most lie among the grave mounds.

Me, my head is long since white,
but I still hold on

to my little slice of cloudy mountain.

I have a message for those who'll come after:

You have to read
the words of the ancients.

XCV

I live on the mountain
no one knows.

Among white clouds
eternal perfect silence.

PART TWO

The Foundling's Poems

Poems of Master Shih Te

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I

If you want to be happy,
there is no way but the hermit's.
Flowers in the grove grow in an endless brocade;
every single season's colors new.
Just sit beside the cliff and turn your head,
to watch the moon roll by.
And me? I ought to be at joyous ease,
but I can't stop thinking of the others.

II

When I was young I studied books and
swordsmanship
and rode off with a shout to the Capital.
There I heard the barbarians
had all been driven off already . . .
There was no place left for heroes.
So I came back to these crested peaks,
lay down to listen to the clear stream's flow.
Young men dream of glory:
monkeys riding on the ox's back.

III

I've always been Shih Te, the Foundling.
It's not some accidental title.
Yet I'm not without a family.
Han Shan's my brother.
Two men with hearts a lot alike.
No need for vulgar love.
If you want to know how old we are . . .
like the Yellow River, that's unclear.

IV

You want to learn to catch a mouse?
Don't take a pampered cat for your teacher.
If you want to learn the nature of the world,
don't study fine bound books.
The True Jewel's in a coarse bag.
The Buddha Nature stops at huts.
The whole herd of folks who clutch
at the outsides of things
never seem to make that connection.

V

My poems are poems,
even if *some people* call them sermons.
Well, poems and sermons do share one thing;
when you read them you got to be careful.
Keep at it. Get into detail.
Don't just claim they're easy.
If you were to live your *life* like that,
a lot of funny things might happen.

VI

I'm free in this cave on T'ien-t'ai:
no seeker here will ever find me.
Han Shan's my only friend.
Chewing magic mushrooms,
underneath tall pines,
we chatter back and forth
of ancient times, and new,
sighing to think of all the others,
each on his own way to hell.
Get your heads out, there's still time!

VII

Greed, anger, ignorance: drink deep
these poisoned wines and lie
drunk and in darkness, unknowing . . .
Make riches your dream: your dream's
a cage of gold. Bitterness is cause of bitterness;
give it up, or dwell within *that* dream.
You better wake up soon, wake up
and go home.

VIII

A long way off, I see men in the dirt,
enjoying whatever it is that they find in the dirt . . .
When I look at them there in the dirt,
my heart wells full of sadness.
Why sympathize with men like these?
I can remember the *taste* of that dirt.

IX

Wisdom's wine's cold water, pure.
Drink deep, it sobers you.
Where I live, at T'ien-t'ai mountain's side
no silly fools will ever find me.
I roam in every shady valley,
but *never* where the world goes.
No worry, no grief,
no shame, and no glory.

X

Since I came home to this T'ien-t'ai temple,
how many winters and springs have passed?
The mountains, the streams, they haven't changed,
but the man's grown older.
How many other men will stand here,
and find these mountains standing?

XI

I see a lot of silly folks
who claim their own small spine's
Sumeru, the sacred mountain
that supports the universe.
Piss ants, gnawing away at a noble tree,
with never a doubt about their strength.
They chew up a couple of Sutras,
and pass themselves off as Masters.
Let them hurry and repent.
From now on no more foolishness.

XII

See the moon's bright blaze of light,
a guiding lamp, above the world!
Glittering, it hangs against the void,
a blazing jewel, its brightness through the mist.
Some people say it waxes, wanes;
theirs may, but mine remains
as steady as the Mani Pearl . . .
This light knows neither day or night.

XIII

The Buddhas left their Sutras,
just because men are so hard to change.
It's not just a matter of saintly or stupid,
each and every heart throws up a barricade,
each piles up his own mountain of karma.
How could they guess
that every single thing
they clutch so close is sorrow?
Unwilling to ponder, day and night,
as they embrace the falsehood that is flesh.

XIV

Sermons? There must be a million.
Too many to read in a hurry . . .
But if you want a friend,
just come on out to T'ien-t'ai.
Sitting deep among the crags,
we'll talk about True Principles
and chat about Dark Mysteries.
If you *don't* come to *my* mountain,
your view will be blocked
by all of the others.

XV

Han Shan's Han Shan.

Me, I'm Shih Te:

How could the ignorant know us?

Old Feng Kan, he thought he knew,

but when he looked, he couldn't see,

and where he searched, he couldn't find us.

You want to know how that could be?

In *our* way's the power of *nonbeing*.

XVI

I laugh at myself, old man, with no strength left,
inclined to piney peaks, in love with lonely
pathways . . .

Oh well, I've wandered down the years to now,
free in the flow, and floated home the same,
a drifting boat.

XVII

Not going, not coming,
rooted, deep and still,
not reaching out, not reaching in,
just resting, at the center.
The single jewel, the flawless crystal drop,
in the blaze of its brilliance,
the way beyond.

XVIII

Cloudy mountains, fold on fold,
how many thousands of them?
Shady valley road runs deep,
all trace of man gone.
Green torrent's pure clear flow,
no place more full of beauty:
and time, and time, birds sing,
my own heart's harmony.

XIX

Now your modern day monk's
fond of preaching of love: hard-core fool.
He starts out in search of getting free
and ends up somebody's lackey,
morning to evening one mean hut to the next
praying and chanting for cash . . .
He makes a bundle, then drinks it up
like any other shop-boy.

XX

Far, so far, the mountain path is steep.
Thousands of feet up, the pass is dangerous and
narrow.
On the stone bridge, moss and lichen . . .
from time to time, a sliver of cloud flying . . .
and cascades hanging, skeins of silk.
Image of the moon from the deep pool, shining,
once more to the top of Flowering Peak,
there waiting, still
the coming of the solitary crane.

PART THREE

Cold City Streets

Poems of Wang Fan-chih,
The Buddhist Layman

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I

There's wind and dust come right on in
this little grass hut.

There's a raggedy rug on the bed.

If somebody comes, I'll invite him on in.

I can scrape up some dirt for us to sit on.

II

No charcoal for heat.

I puff up a flame from willow and hemp stems.

There's raw beer in the jug,

and the three-legged pot's
still got one left to stand on.

III

A lot of guys want high office.
A job that pays enough to fill two bowls
of rice is good enough for me.
The fire that simmers the rice pot
will warm my toes too.

IV

I'm poor, so they laugh at me.
I'm so poor, their laughter delights me.
No ox, no horse,
no bandit worries me.

V

Hot? There's the pool in the creek for a bath.
Cool? Have a song on the bank.
I go where I please, and I do what I want,
so who's got what on me?

VI

I've been hungry so long,
my stomach's a hole I fell in.
Lost child, suffering,
"Oh Mama, how could you have born me?"

VII

That man and his lady, so romantic, in the yellow
dusk . . .
No rice to cook and no wood to cook with . . .
A man and his lady with their bellies empty.
It's a good thing that fasting is holy!

VIII

So *what* in the world's worth anything?
Poetry is priceless (or at least that's what they
pay me).
Explaining, clearly, deeply, Love, and Duty,
what monkey-hearted men will never learn.

IX

I don't want to be *real, real* rich,
don't want to be *real, real* poor.
Let yesterday become today,
and today become tomorrow.
If you can learn to want *no more*,
you might become a *real, real* man.

X

There are few these days
who do not, seeing, sigh,
that we're all toads,
that would be geese, soaring
above the Northern Borderlands.
Fly, and all that's blue is yours.
And yet, on foot, the mud's
all yours to muddle onward in.

XI

Begging can get you a good living,
get you past hunger and cold.
The shaved pates on these Taoist monks,
ride over nice pudgy cheeks.

XII

Every one, on every day,
they come for the meal we offer . . .
Seven bows they give the Buddha
when they come, and again when they go,
leaving their rice bowls empty,
and the collection bowl empty too.

XIII

With your Way, you say,
life conquers death. My Way,
death's always the winner.
Let's let our two Ways duel to the death,
until the battle's over, and we're all dead.

XIV

It will be good to see at last The City of Nirvana,
and to leave these lands of the End Times.
The sky gave me life.
Death is the Earth's last warm embrace.
But at last Life and Death are nothing to me.
I am the ever-flowing stream.

XV

My flesh is meat.
Forms may differ, nature is all ways the same.
Life is in all living things.
In all fleshly things the spirit lives.

XVI

You don't need a mirror to see your face.
You don't have to be rich to give alms.
Just sitting will find you the face . . .
the face of the Buddha, thus come.

XVII

When I move, the city walls move too.
When I nap, I'm sure, the walls stand firm.
But when I die, the walls will all come tumbling
down.
And all *you folks* will be *in danger*.

XVIII

Weep for me, I won't hear you.
Don't weep, I'll still be gone.
The law that all is change! Inconstancy!
The truth of it! It suddenly draws near!
But where is it,
and where am I?

XIX

Life, death, like falling stars,
can flash so fast, or else come
floating, slow and silent, down.
First comers, dead ten thousand years,
in a finishing flash of sparks.
Next those dead just a thousand years,
and the bones they thought were stones are just
dirt, now.
And coming on, this flesh of mine, flown on ahead
of me
a hundred years and in the tomb, already.

XX

Rotting corpses don't stop off to chat
once they start on their way away.
Quick! They get hauled to the fire.
Die young! There'll be no more taxes to pay,
and no more shit to take from the boss man.

XXI

There was never a father and son as close as those
two.

A thousand gold coins wouldn't buy a wry look
or an ill word from either one about the other . . .

Yet when one of them did become suddenly sick,
and then died . . .

the other stepped away and stood far off, afraid for
his life to go near.

XXII

A hungry bird will gorge itself to death,
like a man who'll die to get his hands on *property*.

Money's the thing that ruins humans.

The wise will keep it at a distance.

XXIII

Chaos and squalor on the grandest scale,

Bandits many, good men few.

Grandly sally forth the mean and low,

the big ones all beating on the smaller ones.

XXIV

He's a big boy now: grown up,
and gone off to be a soldier!
Out West to fight those barbarous Tibetans.
Then, oh, what chaos we had here . . .
As he comes marching back,
there's not a one, not a one, left to welcome him.

XXV

Can they ever go home?
Toiling, endlessly toiling,
wives at forced labor,
husbands all press-ganged to war.

XXVI

Your companions, all you've ever known.
Marching along, together, unconscious of your ages.
Now, wrinkled faces, black hair gone white,
staffs in hand, stand ready for the Long Road.

XXVII

Listen you, enjoy your time,
you really don't have very long.
You were born just a moment ago,
in another moment you'll be gone.

NOTES TO THE POEMS

HAN SHAN

XI. This poem gets a little extra buzz from the fact that woodcutters were seen as heroic legendary figures among Taoists and other folks seeking the joys of rural retirement, maybe because they were free and self-employed as providers of a renewable resource that everyone always needs (for cooking, heating, building). Thus Han Shan, the farmer, proudly promotes himself into such company here, before he discovers that the enjoyment of farming life involves a lot of hard work and a lot of good luck. I'm sure that the farmer Han Shan knew all this, and that his persona here is meant to set us up to suffer the inevitable hard times that will soon come "han-gin' round his cabin door."

XIII. One of the several characters for grief or sadness in Chinese is constructed by placing the character for autumn, reduced in size, above the character for heart. "Autumn on the heart" is often my rendering of this compound character, since I believe that, for many people at least, autumn suggests a certain sadness, the end of the year, the passing of time and life. Certainly that was one of the reasons in the minds of those constructing the character three or four thousand years ago. Some human things don't change.

XIV. In this lively, witty poem, Han Shan's been sitting in a monastery, head shaved, trying to accept discipline, when,

enlightened like Hui Neng, the illiterate who truly founded Ch'an as we are coming to know it, he realizes that meditation, while it is a useful discipline, is not the only way to enlightenment. The last two lines appear to me to be Han Shan's response to a meditation master's command that he must still his mouth and his hands (for starters) before he can still his mind. The last line may imply Han Shan's decision to leave the priesthood, letting his shaved head go natural.

XV. This poem sounds a lot like the "going home" poems of the great poet T'ao Ch'ien, poems every T'ang poet knew by heart. If we were to regard the poems as biographical rather than allegorical, which I don't, we could see the farmer Han Shan's self-congratulatory and self-indulgent farm life of the earlier poem leading him to have to sell off the family manse and remove to less fancy quarters. T'ao Ch'ien also moved into simple but functional farm quarters, but in spite of hard times he made a real life for himself and his family "down on the farm."

XVII. I take it that the lady's title, *tung-fang*, is a dialect variation of the standard modern colloquial word for landlady, *fang-tung*. Then the otherwise nonsensical lines lead to a last line that compares the rich landlady with Han Shan, who by realizing his Buddha nature, has become the Lord of the West, the Buddha.

XVIII. It is easy enough to read the next to last line of this poem as something like, "Suddenly rich, he lusts for material goods, and for sex."

But I lust to see something special in the construction of three of the seven characters in the line. The fourth, fifth, and sixth characters all contain an element in common: the element that anciently meant *cowry shell*. Cowries were used very early in Chinese culture as money. They became a me-

dium of exchange in spite of having no intrinsic value, and many believe that their symbolic value arose from their imagined visual resemblance to the external genitalia of the human female. Of course most folks will always see the characters as merely words . . . but poets think of etymologies, or at least of semiologies, the signing or symbolic possibilities of words. Where these values are so available to the eye, and can bring such an instinctive and even unconscious rise from the audience, what poet could resist using them? The first of the four characters represents the concept of *nobility*, though it consists of no more than a string of cowries . . . they were in fact strung together to make larger “denominations.” Money can’t buy you love, but nobility has always been on the price list, and not just in China. The next of the three characters, which means *material wealth*, consists of a *cowry* and the character for *talent*. The final word, which means *lust*, is a compound ideograph, a character created by placing two ideas side by side and letting the reader find a meaning by association of the concepts. Here the two elements are the word for *now* and the word for *cowry*. One wants money *now*; one wants sex *now*. That is *lust*.

I believe that the translation, objectionable as it may be to some, is consistent with the missionary’s mission, and with the rough confrontational style used by Han Shan, Shih Te, and Wang Fan-chih. The Zen missionary was not afraid to hit people or to shout at them: I don’t think he’d be afraid to shock them with a graphic representation of the power of lust, either.

XIX. When I first read this poem it seemed very mysterious. Because of the otherwise incongruous last line, I choose now to read it as a lyrical allegory of the farmer Han Shan’s disastrous failure in a personal quest for Taoist enlightenment, or, maybe, for Taoist alchemical immortality. The experience chronicled here as the white crane’s voyage might

help account for the strongly anti-Taoist point of view that is often evident elsewhere in Han Shan's poems. Han Shan the mountain hermit studies the Taoist philosophy of the scroll of *The Way* and the scroll of *The Power*, but he almost always mocks both the common people's cults of magico-religious Taoism and the Taoist alchemy espoused by the elites. If pursuit of these goals led him to lose his farm and even his family, both his withdrawal into hermitage and his conversion from Taoism would be accounted for.

XXI. Conventional good and evil are rewarded and punished in life, but there is no simple fatalistic determinism in Ch'an Buddhism. "Reincarnation" refers to the moment to moment persistence of an illusory self, ignorant, fearful, and grasping, within the body. Once freed of ignorance (the belief in that illusory self) by following the eight-fold path to completion, the true self, the Buddha nature, is freed to dwell in the body.

XXII. The first two lines recall T'ao Ch'ien again. The Yellow Springs are the Chinese Hades, different to different religions or sets of folk beliefs, but generally a limbo where people wait, or a purgatory where they suffer torments, before being reincarnated. Old man Chang and old lady Cheng are nobody special, which is the point. They're gone, as we all will be.

XXIII. In the line beginning, "Morning after morning," Han Shan opens with a character that can mean either morning or dynasty. Repeated, as it is here, it is almost always "day after day," but the theme of the poem and the wonderful Buddhist sense of time that is the best feature of the poem are best served in translation if we assume his intention is to confuse us, like a modern filmmaker, into not knowing precisely *when* we are. This interpretation also permits us to see the opening of the next line, literally, "year, year" or "harvest, harvest," as another piece of intentional wordplay. It's a translator's choice,

and while I favor “literal” or word-for-word translation wherever and whenever it’s possible, I think cases like this one will help the reader to understand that sometimes the translator has no choice but Hobson’s. If you find another translation of this poem that differs seriously from mine, at least now you may understand who made what choices.

XXV. This poem is often explained as a protest about the “privilege” of the idle Buddhist monk community, who officially lived only by the proceeds of begging alone. I’m inclined to read it as an ironic comment on the effect of the unequal distribution of wealth in the general population. Certainly Lao Tzu also felt that rewarding greed was bad policy as well as immoral. One could argue that the T’ang Empire ultimately collapsed under the weight of the unbalanced scales of economic justice. And sometimes I wonder about ours . . . If a broken biosphere doesn’t get us first?

XXIX. Huntun and his seven holes figure in the following story from *The Essential Chuang Tzu* (Boston: Shambhala, 1998):

The emperor of the Southern Sea was called Hurry Up. The emperor of the Northern Sea was called Suddenly. The emperor of the Middle Between was called Muddle [Huntun]. Hurry Up and Suddenly often went to the land of Muddle, where he treated them with kindness. Hurry Up and Suddenly wanted to repay his virtue and decided, “People all have seven holes to see, hear, eat, and breathe with, but Muddle alone has none. Let’s see whether we can’t help by boring some.” Every day they bored him a new one, and on the seventh day, he died.

The good Taoist (folk wisdom) moral of the story is “Leave well enough alone.” Or maybe, “Don’t be boring your friends.”?

XXXI. Since it is a major tenet of Buddhism, there are many pieces of verse that have to do with not eating meat in the works of all three of our poets, but few reach the level of poetry. This is one of the best, in my humble opinion.

XXXII. The ferns Han Shan harvests like a crop are the traditional starvation diet of two famous ancient paragons of Confucian virtue who died in self-exile in the mountains, out of loyalty to their previous ruler, refusing to serve a lord they didn't recognize as legitimate. No such situation is pictured here. Han Shan knows he can survive on wild food, the crops nature provides.

XXXIII. This poem brims, wells, flows, crashing into final silence. I've taken considerable license in the translation of the poem, feeling licensed by Han Shan himself. The poem, only four five-character lines in the original, follows a traditional poetic practice first established in the *Shih Ching* or *Classic of Poetry*, of stating its theme in the opening lines through a graphic description of nature, which is to be seen and appreciated for its own beauty, and then taken as a guide in understanding the theme of the poem that follows. The green stream arises from a clear, pure spring. In the water of the Cold Mountain stream, the moon is a white flower. The next two lines describe an actual practice, a method, of Ch'an meditation in T'ang times, the visualizing of the sun in the sky. The first word of the poem is the word for the green which is the color of the eyes of Bodhidharma, Ch'an's first patriarch. The moon is always the Buddha nature; it is seen in all waters by anyone anywhere who *looks*, and yet it is only One. The last character of the poem means "silence." It also means "nirvana." Nature miraculously speaks the language of Buddhism here. No ideas but in things, indeed.

XXXIV. The robe is his faith, but it seems to me that Han Shan is not, as some commentators insist, speaking of the saffron robes of a monk (who looks down on the red-robed rich and the purpled royals). His is the robe of a faith that appears as rags to other men. But I won't quibble at the material of the miraculous.

XXXV. This appears to be a traditional *yung-wu*, a poem that sings the virtues of a particular object. Such a poem could be simply a poetic exercise, a vehicle for wit, or, often, a vehicle for political satire. The abbot's whisk was a symbol of authority, but could be used as well for such apparently disparate tasks as dusting the furniture and dusting off the shaven pate of the lackadaisical meditator.

XXXVII. A house built on a weak foundation will not stand! Even with the best intentions, false doctrine leads nowhere. This simple message is presented with wonderful tricks of language here. The spring-tree of the opening line is a name for a cedar, admittedly a fragrant tree, and one we love in the West, as evidenced by our cedar chests and cedar closets. But the character for spring-tree consists in the original of an element meaning tree and another meaning spring, the season. To most Chinese, and all Chinese poets, as to most people anywhere, spring is seen as the season of love, or of sex, to be less roundabout. So the missionary Taoist (probably the main aim of this tirade against false-thinking religious leaders) is here subtly accused of selling at least the fragrance of sex (a part of both tantric Buddhist and Taoist stock-in-trade). They may also be selling the metaphor of the new beginning that is the promise of sex.

But that's just the beginning for this poem. At the end of line 4, Han Shan uses one of several available Chinese terms for final Buddhist enlightenment, a transliteration (giving the

sound rather than translating the meaning) of the Sanskrit word *nirvana*, rather than any of the more common translated terms that might occur here. The transliteration is *ni-fan* (just an attempt at suggesting the pronunciation of the original). The character used for the sound of the first syllable, *ni*, literally means “mud” in any other context. It’s a common word in Chinese. The second character, *fan*, means all sorts of things, from “all” and “everywhere,” to “mortal” and “earthly,” but it is also an eye pun (it looks something like) and/or a close homophone (sounds like) to several characters that have meanings such as “round,” “ball,” “pill,” “pellet,” or “to come together,” “to convene,” the last two by extension from the forming of a ball. The combination of the *ni*, mud, with any of these apparently unrelated characters and others with similar sounds is often used in both Taoist and Buddhist poetry after Han Shan to refer to the human body, as a “mud ball dissolving in the water” (the water of passing time, presumably).

In the last two lines Han Shan returns to this image, finding sand (again) a poor medium for making mud balls, or religious organizations. This appears to be one of those poems that has both an exoteric and esoteric meaning, the two not so very far apart, but the joy of discovery, alone, is worth the chase. Recall this poem when you read Shih Te in his poem V saying,

Well, poems and sermons do share one thing;
when you read them you got to be careful.

.....

If you were to live your *life* like that,
a lot of funny things might happen.

XXXVIII. I think that by now we know Han Shan better than to think that he’s viciously mocking a bad poet. It’s more likely that he is mocking himself, in the manner of the Lao Tzu of

Tao Te Ching, passage 20, who finds himself the only sad baby among a myriad self-satisfied men of the world.

XL. Obviously the poem is another jab at the uncaring rich. It might also mock those Buddhist sects of the T'ang that did not share the democratic and missionary zeal of the T'ien-t'ai school, the major branch of Chinese Buddhism from which Ch'an (or Zen) itself grew.

XLI. A cute silly song. Windows were sometimes made of bottle necks, passing the light but blocking the wind. There is a long association of drunkenness with happy joviality in Chinese culture as in European cultures, but in China there is also a more serious and maybe ironic association of drunkenness with enlightenment. In the latter tradition it is suggested it's possible that, while the near enlightenment we feel when we're plastered is surely bogus, "true enlightenment" may just be as well.

XLII. Many commentators tell us that this poem is based on an argument made by Han Fei-tzu, the evil genius of Legalism, which was the ideology of the horrific Emperor Ch'in Shih Huang Ti and his Reich that would last a thousand years and only fell about 980 years short. Put simply, Han Fei-tzu's argument was that it is hard to hear the revolutionary ideas of "new men," revolutionary thinkers like himself, when the emperor's ear is only given to the vested interests of the old order. The same was true of Zen, even among liberal T'ien-t'ai thinkers in the T'ang, though to make Han Fei-tzu a mouthpiece for Ch'an seems a pretty poor choice. The tavern also seems an unlikely place for any Buddhist to learn a lesson, but Han Shan's buddy Shih Te does complain, elsewhere, about monks who make money performing religious rituals and then spend it on wine, "like any other shop-boy," (XIX). Poems like this remind me that Han Shan lived in a real world.

XLIII. Buddhist commentators see an elaborate spiritual *mapus mundi* here. Mount Sumeru is the mountain at the center of the world, and also, for meditational purposes, the human spine. In the poem the plate and cups are supposed to represent the continents and seas surrounding Sumeru. Personally I see Han Shan, the farmer and the Zen man, seeing the mountain as the mountain, the river as the river, and wine and good fellowship as also in and of themselves good. I suspect that the commentators' view is simply mythicization, or the creation of allegory from experience for religion's sake.

XLVI. There is no mockery of *true* scholars in the poetry of Han Shan. Hypocrisy and arrogance are the enemy. Either from his own life experience or from observation, Han Shan sees that the Confucian scholar's efforts may be driven by vanity and the desire for power or fame, but he also recognizes that like the T'ien-t'ai Buddhist, the true Confucian's sole motivation is to serve his fellow human beings.

XLVII. In the original this is a witty little jingle, doing away with the intellectual pretensions of both Confucianism and Taoism, and ending with an intentional garble of a historically unintentional garble. Garbled garble makes fun reading. To begin with, thirty years is the age at which Confucius said that he had found his way. Han Shan brags that he's done *way* more than Confucius ever did, but we are supposed to note that it is the age at which Han Shan has found his way as well. "The Writings" and "the Histories" are the basis of Confucian education. Herbal stimulants like ephedra, and including many we no longer know (but probably *not* cannabis), were fundamental aids to meditation, and chemical mixtures and mercury compounds, as well as herbs, were staples for some Taoists. The final silly line, the garble of a garble, involves the story of a third-century gentleman's slip of the tongue. Intending to say, "I'll pillow my head on the rocks, and rinse

out my mouth in the stream," he said, "I'll pillow my head in the stream, and wash my teeth with the rocks." Han Shan is showing his erudition by knowing the quote and mocking such useless knowledge at the same time. Or so I think . . . The original garbler was probably trying to allude to the story, in *Chuang Tzu*, of Hsü Yu, who washes out his ears after they are soiled by the emperor's offer of his throne.

XLIX. Most of the Cold Mountain poems describe the real physical and mental difficulty of living in a mountain hermitage. With its emphasis on sensual beauty, this poem seems almost like the bait for a bait and switch.

It is hard for most modern or postmodern folk to accept that in Zen, for a master, the end does justify the means. Does it help that it's *only* for a master, and that *you*, not he, decide who that master is? Han Shan's a slippery one.

LI. As much as I have tried to find some compassion in this poem, I cannot. Therefore I suspect it of being the product of a monk making Han Shan orthodox. It's certainly a lot more powerful than most of the poems I assign to this category, and when I think of the heartless passion of some PETA extremists (with whom I am generally in complete agreement), I guess I can imagine even *my* Han Shan damning the butcher to a round in hell and a next life damned to karmic retribution.

The Buddhas mentioned are statues. The "meat-eye," a term I find so strong as to deserve the shock of this sort of literal translation, or I would say half-translation, is the carnal eye, the eye that enslaves its owner to the meat he eats as well as to the flesh of sexuality.

LII. See *Tao Tè Ching*, passage 40, as the original literary source for the example of the three types of readers and their reactions.

The story behind the reference to Yang Hsiu involves a simple sort of code writing or riddling character play within a literary text that is not hard to find within Han Shan's work itself, and its inclusion certainly supports my insistence on some cryptic readings among Han Shan's own poems. Yang Hsiu was a master of many forms of literary art, including poetry and *fu* (now generally believed to have been a form devoted to just the sort of riddling with characters that we see in the poem here). According to the story, Yang Hsiu solved a riddle for his powerful friend Ts'ao P'ei, which involved the placing of the two characters for "female" and "few" or "young" together in a single character whose meaning was "mysterious." This riddle may be particularly interesting here, in our Han Shan poem, considering that the character for "mystery" is, in many editions of the *Tao Te Ching*, a main character in the final lines of the first poem, or passage, of that work. I don't find a further coded message in this particular poem, but I would consider it a warning from Han Shan for us to be on the lookout.

LIII. Lao Tzu says,

So the wise soul
governing people
would empty their minds
fill their bellies
weaken their wishes
strengthen their bones.

(*Lao Tzu: Tao Te Ching: A Book about the Way and the Power of the Way*, trans. Ursula K. Le Guin with the collaboration of J. P. Seaton [Shambhala, 1997], passage 3.)

Many see this particular passage as a terrible call for the tyrannical manipulation of the popular mind. Han Shan appears to take it as a call to a simple, joyous way of living.

LV. I read this poem as a description of the life of an honest monk doing his duties to help the bereaved, and I split the final two characters, which literally mean just “sad,” to give a semiotic (or idiotic?) reading that compares the monk’s work to a housewife’s—never finished, always necessary. The key to my reading lies in line 2, where the word *shih*—usually “affairs,” and in modern Chinese, white-collar work or “business”—appears. For a T’ien-t’ai Buddhist it is the word for the real work, the saving of humans from suffering.

LVI. The *Classic of Dutiful Children* is a correct, if unusual, rendering of the title more commonly known as *The Classic of Filial Piety* (*Hsiao Cing*), a title which I have found, in teaching undergraduates, often needs a translation from the English. My apologies to those who know it in its proper form, but I’m sure you were able to “back-form” it from mine.

LVII. The poem is full of remembered sexuality. The mountain represents the male member in much of Chinese erotic poetry. The valley, in Lao Tzu, is the female. The old man, hard at his meditation to set the spirit free in spite of flagging vigor, is assailed by his animal nature. Like Lao Tzu, Han Shan is always honest, except when he’s fooling.

LVIII. The first two lines are the words of one P’u-shang, from the *Analects of Confucius*. The remaining quotation is from the same passage of that work, as all Han Shan’s readers would have known. One of the things that makes this poem better than just an excellent comparison of punctilious selfishness with thoughtful generosity, lies in the little wordplay that ends the last two lines. The character for Tzu-chang’s “words” is one of the earliest and most common words for language, *yen*. It consists of a roof over the number two, which is in turn over a mouth: Whatever the actual etymology, it appears to be “language,” that which two folks will engage in

if they're stuck in cramped quarters (it might as well mean sex, but it doesn't). The word that ends the poem, describing Pu-shang's quote, is *yü*, which consists of a small (half-size) repeat of the *yen* character above, with another character, pronounced *wu*, beside it. This particular *wu* is an early form of the character for "me," or "I." Pu-shang's words are, and are here described, in a fun riddling code, as mean, petty, small, and egotistical. Neat!

LXI. Here the "bookworm" is holding Lao Tzu's *The Way and Its Power* (*Tao Te Ching*) which was often divided into two scrolls. He's also ready to wield the *Sword of Wisdom* mentioned in the deeply Chinese-influenced Buddhist classic, the *Vimalakirti Sutra*, one of the favorite sutras of Zen. Maybe it's good to sing the old refrain again here: Zen is Taoist Buddhism. Neither Lao Tzu's Taoism nor the Buddha's Buddhism is a supernatural religion claiming the authority of revealed truth. Their classic texts are humanist spiritual guides and wisdom texts open to the use of all. Historically, both grew to look more like what we in the West call "religions," but the nature of the Chinese written language allowed every reader access to the eternal truths behind ephemeral doctrine and dogma.

I wonder if the bookworm will metamorphose into Chuang Tzu's butterfly . . .

LXII. Red Pine [Bill Porter] makes a good point about the scholarship, both Chinese and Japanese, on this one. The poem is a joke! A good poem, if a sad one.

LXIII. This poem is empty of all but the mystic's vision. I think that Saint Francis, friend of the sun, would recognize Han Shan as a friend. Nothing is here but everything. The poem's language is ecstatic, and it is artful. In line 3, the poet doubles the word *t'ang* (it means simply "a hall" as a single noun, but

when doubled, it's a descriptive adjective for things "morally upright"). It's used that way in the *Analects of Confucius* as a description of Tzu-chang, the favorite disciple quoted above in poem LIX. In line 4, the poet doubles the character that means "sun," but which, as a very rare compound (like the previous *t'ang-t'ang*) recalls the famous injunction carved on the bathtub of the Duke of Chou (and thence into Ezra Pound's *Cantos*!) to renew oneself every day, not just to get clean, but to start fresh, to get *new*, daily: as in "Zen mind, beginner's mind." The Duke of Chou (the illustrious regent and founder of the Chou dynasty) and Tzu-chang would make a wonderful start toward the thousands of Sages Han Shan invites to visit him. Every Chinese reader in the T'ang dynasty would have easily recognized these apparently arcane allusions. Han Shan invites all the good guys (including you and me) to come visit him, and his special friend and true self, the Buddha.

To my taste at least, there are only a few poems as good as this one among the 307 (or 311) attributed to Han Shan. There are fewer than that that are better. As I've said before, I think a lot of the poems, good or bad, were clearly forgeries, created by monks of greater or lesser talents to make a small set of brilliant eccentric works into a "classic" for the new Zen sect. There are some pretty good, mostly funny, *ma-jen ta-jen* poems that might have been written by the best of the forgers. The poet who wrote this poem was a very well-educated, full-bodied, deep-minded, freethinking spirit who lived most of his life on a mountain, where he wrote great poetry, and I'd feel safe calling him Han Shan.

LXIV. More ecstatic poetry! Sunlight and sunlight on sunlight! Flowering Peak is the tallest of the T'ien-t'ai group, and it lies in sight of the sea to the east (whence the sun comes). Taoist mountain hermits (and the white cranes they are identified with) congregated here before Ch'an existed.

LXVI. This poem gives further indication that T'ang Zen meditation involved visualizing the sun. The sun at the horizon, at sunset, is believed to be a promise of nirvana.

LXIX. The fallen house is a fallen man. The missionary's work is impossible, and that is part of its appeal. It's also why infinite time is allotted for it in the lives of the bodhisattvas.

LXX. The last line of this one is sometimes read as Han Shan countering the mockery of the city boys with a vow that he will one day achieve spiritual glory. I see a mockery of all striving.

LXXII. In the original, line 2 includes "songs and folk songs"; line 3, *gathas*, or Buddhist hymns; and in the last line, a term for tinkering with verse construction. It's a light, witty, little song, really appropriate to a man who's found himself somehow spiritually free after a lifetime of struggle.

LXXIII. Hui Neng was the founder of Southern School Zen, perhaps the true founder or first teacher of Ch'an as we know it. He told his disciples that, because "fundamentally not one thing exists," there is no need to polish the mind's mirror, and he also told them that, when questioned about the abstract, they must answer in terms of the material; and about the material, with the abstract.

LXXXII. This poem, rich in visual imagery as it may be, is also both perfectly mystical and full of Buddhist language that would be jargon in a lesser poet's hands. Mysticism (the search for or achievement of union with "god" or the spirit of the universe) and mystery are close, but not the same. Maybe.

Certainly the Han Shan who, like a good Chuang Tzu—reading Taoist, often mocks both doctrine and dogma on the one hand and so-called philosophy on the other, enjoys exu-

berantly flinging those sorts of things around in this poem. The word I have translated as “universe” is actually “chilocosm” (a thousand universes) which isn’t really an English word, yet (at least not in my house, or, that is to say, not according to my edition of the OED). Since my son Charles and I coined the word “infiniverse” twenty years ago, some modern scientists have converged toward our “world” view, or toward the ancient Brahmanic/Buddhist one.

XC. The bodhisattva Han Shan finds it to his purpose to remind us that even the enlightened mind is sometimes sad and lonely in this world.

XCI. I suspect that some Western readers might complain that this one sounds like it was written by a nine hundred-pound Zen master. (He says *whatever* he wants.) But the poem is worth thinking about. Remember that Lao Tzu says that if some folks didn’t laugh at the Tao we wouldn’t know it was the Tao. Also recall that “Zen” literally means meditation. Is he chiding himself for inadequate effort? I’d love to be able to lead you through this poem one word at a time. It’s a puzzle worth trying to solve.

XCII. “The Diamond” references *The Diamond Sutra*, one of the most famous of all the sutras, holy writings of Buddhism said to be the words of the Buddha himself.

XCIV. The words rendered as “I have a message for those who’ll come after” were actually an ancient poetic formula already in circulation in Han Shan’s times. The poem also uses a variant, and more classical, form for the first person pronoun than the character Han Shan usually uses. The fact that Han Shan uses any “I” at all is in itself pretty unusual for classical Chinese poetry, and it marks him as either poorly educated or as an antinomian rebel, not as an individualist

but adamantly as an individual who is as free of tradition as any man can make himself. But the archaic language he uses here shows that he read and honored literary tradition.

The "words of the ancients," which he recommends, would include the two scrolls of Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching*, the book of Chuang Tzu, and his own ageless, classic poems (arrogant, in-your-face, *ma-jen ta-jen*). He has also elsewhere shown a deep and thorough knowledge of the *Analects of Confucius* and two or three sutras. The Confucian classics of poetry and history and, without doubt, the poetry of T'ao Ch'ien also make his required reading list. Ch'an is famous for being antitext, but very apparently there are limits. There are fundamentals to be learned by anyone who wants to communicate. Only a fool refuses the use of the useful.

XCV In the original, this poem has only three words, that is, three syllables, per line. It's hard to make anything like a connected meaningful utterance as short as this in English, where grammatical markers add syllables to already polysyllabic words and sentences usually require at least subjects. But poetry isn't always in the niceties of formal presentation: Sometimes the bare words can make a poem on their bare own, just like bare things making bare phenomenal reality. This seems to me to be one of those times.

SHIH TE

I. Here as in his poem VIII, Shih Te's *karuna*, universal compassion, stands out, marking him, in his own way, as a revisionist of Han Shan's message. Han Shan was, at least in the earliest poems, more a Taoist, less interested in *active* compassion or missionary efforts. The mystery of Han Shan's Buddhist sainthood lies in his perfect mixture of Taoist and T'ien-t'ai Buddhist ideals, just as Ch'an, or Zen, is also the perfect mixture of humorous relativism with the passionate

idealism of the bodhisattva, forever committed to the salvation of all sentient beings.

II. The last two lines of this poem will remind many readers of the Ch'an master Kakuan's twelfth-century drawings, with story in verse, maybe (as is the case for me) as re-created in *Zen Flesh Zen Bones*, by Paul Reps and Nyogen Senzaki. Kakuan's pictures of the boy and his ox are a uniquely powerful presentation of one of the oldest of the Zen sayings, that "a person searching for the Buddhist enlightenment is like a man riding an ass in search of an ass." In Kakuan's versions, the ass becomes more elegantly an ox, not because an ox is intrinsically superior to an ass, but because one of the Buddha's oldest titles was the "Ox King."

III. Note the absence of any mention of Feng Kan. Maybe he hadn't been invented by the time this poem was written.

V. How much clearer could the poet make it? Every poem is as simple as the world. But of course you can do your reading, and your figuring, while you're sitting on your ass, anyway.

VI. Again Shih Te pulls punches while he does his *ma-jen ta-jen* act, ending with a compassionate plea, wrapped in an insult.

VII. As far as sermon-poems go, they don't get much better than this one, to my mind.

VIII. The word we usually translate as "dust," or "the red dust," is a conventional epithet for the *klesas*, or "defilements," of life in the everyday world, everything from simple dirt, to the deep moral defilements we accept in the compromises and little hypocrisies of everyday lay living. And the word gets used that way, indiscriminately, in all Chinese poetry, Confucian as well

as Taoist or Buddhist. The fine poet who calls himself Shih Te realizes that repetition has sapped the word of most of its strength; his solution is as daring as any *ma-jen ta-jen* koan: He multiplies the repetitions of the word in this single poem until we are forced to understand the original powerful meaning again. It's a terrible poem, with all those repetitions, isn't it? It's terrible, that taste, if I recall it correctly.

IX. The word "glory" might end the poem because it fits the rhyme scheme. Is it that easy? If so, it's not much of a poem, is it? Pride, perhaps especially pride in accomplishing good, may be particularly hard to give up.

XI. See Wang Fan-chih's poem XVII.

XIV. The nice little play from the purely visual to the metaphor is almost a pun in the original, where mountain, *shan*, and meditation practice, *ch'an*, sound a lot alike. If you don't learn Ch'an from Shih Te and Han Shan, there will be many others sitting around on other mountains who have other points of view to sell you.

XV. Here Shih Te seems to debunk the idea that Feng Kan, Master Big-Stick, was ever really one of the boys. Readings that make Feng Kan a part of the group seem to me to force the grammar.

I love this poem and particularly enjoy what I see as a wonderful pun in the final line. Most translations have it that Shih Te is simply claiming the power of nondoing or the Taoist *wu-wei*, but in this context, where Han Shan and Shih Te have apparently gained the power to become invisible to Feng Kan, I think Shih Te wants us to laugh with him at the idea that *wu-wei* could just as well mean "nonbeing." It would be an anticanonical reading for sure, though not a totally ungrammatical one.

XVII. To my mind, this poem is as close as Shih Te ever comes to the mystical spirituality that is among Han Shan's many sources of originality and power.

I suspect he is describing his meditation experience, something adepts are generally not supposed to do.

XX. It strikes me as strange that this poem seems to find the poet waiting for Taoist enlightenment. According to tradition, the Taoist master is able to turn himself into an immortal crane and fly free as he pleases. Apparently even in the period when the Han Shan-Shih Te collection was taking canonical form Taoists and Ch'an practitioners still made fewer distinctions among themselves than we tend to.

WANG FAN-CHIH

II. To allow the pot to stand directly over the little fire (used in this case for warming the strong rice beer, or sake), the wok or saucepan of the poor often had three legs. It may add to the humor of the piece that the giant ceremonial cast-bronze *ting* cauldrons used in the highest rituals of state were also of this ancient form. The reference to the burning of hemp stem most likely does not imply recreational use of cannabis by the poet. Though the powerful Mao Shan school (or church) of popular Taoism apparently made use of hashish as "incense" in its church ritual, there is very little indication of any but medical use of cannabis in Chinese literary circles, at least.

VII. The "yellow dusk" is, by traditional poetic allusion, the time for a romantic tryst. If ever there were a truly brilliantly cruel use of literary allusion, it is here. I suppose that it is the occasional outburst of this sort of righteous anger, of raging political consciousness, and, maybe paradoxically, not just his wit or his Buddhist piety (to be seen elsewhere) that made the poems of this poet (or these poets) seem worth claiming for

Buddhism and filing in the library as the work of a "Buddhist layman." Certainly it would have made his works popular among the ravaged populace of the late T'ang.

IX. The Buddha saw craving as the single cause of suffering. Wang Fan-chih says over and over again in a variety of gritty, down home ways that greed will get you only grief. The "real man," or "true man," is the enlightened man of Taoism, in Chuang Tzu as well as in Lao Tzu. His enlightenment lies just in the knowledge that enough is enough. In this insight is one of the single most important convergences of Taoism and Buddhism that made Ch'an almost a necessary outcome of their cultural meeting. Wang Fan-chih's homely statement, and restatement, of the truth only underlines its fundamental importance.

X. The language of this wonderful piece of wistful nonsensicalness suggests the silliest of Chuang Tzu's imaginative flights. I think Wang Fan-chih intends us to realize that since we are, at least in being earthbound, more toad than goose, we might better enjoy our time in the mud than waste it in pining for flight. Post-T'ang Zen often embraces the mud in a pretty lusty, randy, even bawdy fashion. See Arthur Waley's *Monkey*, a brilliantly truncated version of Wu Ch'eng-en's *Hsi Yu Chi (Journey to the West)*, as a fine literary example of the late-Zen ideal. The characters Monkey and Piggy are both excellent literary examples of the late-Zen ideal.

XI. See also the note to Han Shan's poem XXV. Wang Fan-chih's poem refers specifically to Taoist monks, but among Buddhists, all but Ch'an monks were required by their vows to accept begging as the sole means of livelihood. This poem, mocking begging as it does, might be evidence that this incarnation of Wang Fan-chih, at least, thought of himself as a Ch'an man.

XII. This poem offers evidence of the social services provided, even invented, by Chinese Buddhist churches. In addition to the traditional soup kitchen described here, these included, during the T'ang, hospitals, orphanages and schools for indigent children, old-folks homes, low-interest loan services that cut out usurious loan sharks, and low-cost apothecary shops. I take it the poet here is complaining about a lack of appreciation: He may simply be underlining the rock-bottom poverty of the people served.

XIII. Maybe this poem's not quite a riddle wrapped in an enigma, but, for me at least, its cryptic suggestiveness certainly rivals its slightly silly wit as the prime source of interest. Has the Buddhist speaker met a Taoist alchemist? Or, out there in Tun-huang, the outpost on the Silk Road where Wang Fan-chih's poems were found (if not written), did the poet run into a Christian merchant, or even a missionary? The library where the poems were discovered was sealed only a couple of centuries, more or less, before Marco Polo (and several emissaries of the Pope) reached China from the Roman Catholic West. Eastern Christians arrived earlier.

XIV. Though it begins with reference to the Buddhist concept of nirvana and alludes to the thinking of the Buddhist Sect of the Five Stages in line 2, the rest of the poem has much more the feel of the naturalistic fatalism of Taoism (if it is proper to call anything so joyously positive as the Taoism of Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu "fatalistic"). Such a confusion of Buddhist and Taoist beliefs is often apparent in the Han Shan poems (which may indeed have come together over a period of nearly four hundred years). The same time frame may apply to Wang Fan-chih's poems, but it seems to me more likely that they simply reflect a lower level of conventional education (though certainly not of spirit or of poetic talent) for the Wang Fan-chih poets.

XV. There are many vegetarian poems among those of our three Buddhist poets. This one seems to me to be the most passionate of all of them.

XVI. "Sitting": sitting in deep mind meditation. The Sanskrit is *dhyaana*, the Chinese is *ch'an*, and the Japanese and English is *zen*, in case it has begun to slip your mind. "Sitting" is almost always a technical term in the poems of Han Shan, Shih Te, and Wang Fan-chih. The true face of the Buddha is your face.

XVII. This seems to me to be surprisingly direct mockery of the same solipsistic worldview that Shih Te treats more orthodoxly, but not less fiercely, in his poem XI, which begins, "I see a lot of silly folks."

XXV. This quatrain might be seen as no more than a particularly sharp version of the traditional lament for the plight of the common people in wartime. Finding it among the poems of Wang Fan-chih, I was struck by the idea of this tragic scene being replayed by reincarnated players, over and over through the *kalpas* of Buddhist time. Funny what a change of point of view can do.

XXVI. The fate of the draftee, mentioned so many times in traditional Chinese poetry, was viewed as particularly tragic, since it forcibly enlisted peasant boys in their youths and released them, should they survive so long, only as old men. Wang Fan-chih's poem XXIV is another good example of these. Though there are many moving poems that present the return of the old soldier to his home village where he has been gone so long that he is unrecognized even by his family, I know of no other in that long tradition that presents the soldiers as *never* going home, except, staffs in hand, down the long road home to death. The ghostly army here is almost un-Chinese, maybe a product of the same cultural intermix we see in Wang Fan-chih's poem XIII.

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- Once we start our work, it's heart in hand, 51
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- People ask about the Cold Mountain way, 27
- Pigs eat dead man meat, 37
- Ranges, ridges, daunting cliffs, I chose this place
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- Rich men's sons convened in a high hall, 43
- Rotting corpses don't stop off to chat, 95
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- See the moon's bright blaze of light, 80
- Sermons? There must be a million, 81
- Set foot on Han Shan's Way? 30
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- Sitting alone now, my mind's always flagging, suddenly, 52
- So *what* in the world's worth anything?, 89
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- Sometimes from down below, 64
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- "Take a saint for a friend," said P'u-shang, 53
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