

Poems Selected from *The Collected Songs of Cold Mountain*. Trans. Red Pine.

1.

storied cliffs were the fortune I cast  
bird trails beyond human tracks  
what surrounds my yard  
white clouds nesting dark rocks  
I've lived here quite a few years  
and always seen the spring-winter change  
tell those people with tripods and bells  
empty names are no damn good

16

people ask the way to Cold Mountain  
roads don't reach Cold Mountain  
summer the ice never melts  
sunup the fog is thick  
how did someone like me arrive  
our minds aren't the same  
if they were  
you could get there then

26

I've lived on Cold Mountain now  
already a few million years  
trusting fate I fled to woods and springs  
to linger and gaze where I will  
no one comes to the cliffs  
white clouds keep them shrouded  
fine grass serves a mattress  
blue sky does for a quilt  
happy with a rock for a pillow  
let Heaven and Earth transform.

29

pole your three winged galleons  
ride your thousand-mile stallions  
you still won't reach my home  
it's called the darkest wild  
cliff cave deep in the mountains  
clouds and thunder come down all day  
I'm not Master Confucius  
I have nothing to say

30

wise ones you ignore me  
I ignore you fools  
neither wise nor foolish  
don't hear of me henceforth  
at night I'll sing to the moon  
at dawn I'll dance with the clouds  
how can I stop my mouth and hands  
and sit up straight with all this hair

(Red Pine's note on this poem quotes Hui Neng. "To still the mind and contemplate purity is a disease, not meditation. To sit all the time constrains the body and doesn't profit the understanding. Listen to my song: Alive they sit, never resting/dead they rest, never sitting/with a bunch of stinking bones/how can you start your training.")

37

I've heard that cares are hard to dispel  
a saying I thought untrue  
but yesterday what I drove off  
entangles me again today  
moons wane but not cares  
the year is new but cares are newer  
who's guess beneath the big hat  
is really a man of old cares

43

the white crane carries a bitter flower  
a thousand miles before resting  
he's bound for the peaks of P'eng Lai  
with this for his provision  
not yet there his feathers break off  
far from the flock he grieves  
returning to his old nest  
his wife and children don't know him

45

if you were too dumb the life before  
you won't be enlightened now  
and such poverty as today's  
is the work of previous lives  
don't reform this life either  
and next life will be the same  
on both shores there's no ferry  
it's far but you'll cross one day

48

beneath high cliffs I lie alone  
steaming clouds don't fade all day  
my hut might be dim  
but my mind is free of noise  
off dreaming I visited golden gates  
my spirit returned when I crossed Stone Bridge  
I left behind what burdened me  
my dipper in the trees click clack

54

picking lotuses we called  
the Clearwater was lovely  
having fun we didn't feel dusk  
we kept watching a wild wind stir  
swells cradled the mandarin ducks  
waves rocked the mallards  
and us resting our oars  
while our thoughts surged on and on

171

in Liang times I've heard  
the Worthies of four Reliances  
Peo Chih and Master Fa Yun  
the four Immortals and Scholar Fu  
made known the teachings of a lifetime  
served as the Tathagata's envoys  
built retreats for the Order  
and relied on the Buddha's Law with faith  
such were their achievements  
but actions make more trouble  
and lead further from the Way  
they tore the West to patch the East  
they didn't know the merit of inaction  
they did great harm and not much good  
sound but no form  
where are they today

177

you who seek the Way  
you waste your spirit searching  
we all have something wondrous  
unmarked and unnamed  
called it answers clearly  
it doesn't stay in hiding  
guard it well I pray/don't let it get scratched up

197

is there a self or not  
is this me or not  
this is what I ponder  
still seated against the cliff  
while between my feet green grass grows  
and on my head red dust settles  
I've even seen members of the laity  
leave fruit and wine by the bier

200

the unfortunate human disorder  
a palate that's never weary  
of steamed piglet with garlic sauce  
roast duck with pepper and salt  
deboned raw fish mince  
unskinned cooked pork cheek  
unaware of the bitterness of others' lives  
as long as their own are sweet

208

where's the dew that fell this morning  
daybreak it disappeared  
man's body is like that too  
and Jambu but an inn  
so don't just go along  
let the Poison Three be gone  
enlightenment is affliction  
let there be nothing left at all

229

you're all a bunch of angels  
on a rotten bark at sea  
in front your mast is gone  
in back your rudder too  
round and round where the wind blows  
high and low with the swell of the waves  
how will you get to shore  
look alive don't sit there stiff I see are fools

230

all I see are fools  
storing wealth and grain  
drinking wine and eating creatures  
thinking they're well-to-do  
unaware of the depth of Hell  
seeking only blessings for Heaven  
with bad karma like Vipula  
can they escape disaster  
the boss suddenly dies  
they crowd around to cry  
hire monks to read elegies  
but ghostly pay is void  
without one field of blessings  
supporting baldheads a waste  
and not like waking in time  
but making a hell of darkness  
a tree unmoved by wild winds  
a mind true neither sinful nor blessed  
tell those blockheads for me  
tell them to read this over

235

a notice to all good people  
what do you think about  
reaching the Way seeing What's What  
What's What is just What's Here  
What's Real has always been perfect  
pursuing proof you get further away  
forsaking the trunk for twigs  
all you get is stupid

259

give me the joys of the mountains  
rambling not tied down  
feeding a crippled frame day by day  
musing with nothing to do  
unrolling an ancient sutra  
or climbing a granite spire  
peering down thousand-foot cliffs  
or up where clouds roll around  
the desolation of a winter moon  
a body like a lone flying crane