On A Collection of Cold Mountain’s Poems

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Cold Mountain, whose date and name was unknown, obscured himself long in the Cuiping Mountain (also known as Cold Cave or Cold Mountain), and set up as Cold Mountain or Man of Cold Mountain. There have been a wide diversity of opinions about his age and all his born days. Principally, there are two centralized views: One holds that Cold Mountain was born in the early Tang Dynasty; the other holds that Cold Mountain was born in the middle period of the Tang Dynasty. The paper followed what had been expounded for further probes.

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The Man of Cold Mountain, an anonym, lived in the shadow of Cuiping Mountain of Tiantai during 766 to 779 A.D. And in the bosom of such a mountain, even the very flush of summer had been balled with snow, known as Cold Cave, and thus came the self-styled Cold Mountain. He had a bent for poetry, and even one rhyme or one poem was written on the stones of the wood—to be recorded by those well-meaning men—added up to over three hundred poems. Most of them were ad-lib from his anchoritism, either saturnine or aphoristic. And Xu Lingfu of Tongbai preface and volumed it into three parts and came down.

Cold Mountain was called “have-not” in the preface by Lüqiū Yin, “recluse” in The Collection of Ancestral Hall, and “obscured himself long in the Cuiping Mountain” in The Reminders about Immortals—this shows that he was a hermit. Merely his poems rather cottoned to the knowledge of the dharma, as exampled with such a line “Since I entered religion,/ I’ve been getting the regime benefits” (Xiang, 2019, p. 270). And so he was more popularly reputed “monk-poet.” As for his career, there has not been the remotest chance of criticism, some of which could only trickle out in his poems. While numbers of poems that depicted his life and taste about his anchoritism in Cold Cave have been viewed as the memoir. Yet his strain and his experience before he lived in privacy have still been a mystery.

As his poem reads like this,
“Thirtyish,/ on safari./ By waterfront, green grass aren’t baddish,/ in frontier, dust and fire are in a flurry./ Refining
drugs, to be immortal in vain,/ hitting the books, on historical themes./ Back to Cold Mountain again,/ as an anchorite far
from official schemes. (Cold Mountain, Poem. 302)

His ambition before he lived in Cold Cave can be obviously seen. There is one more poem:

When young, I was farmer and scholar,/ and should have lived together with elder brother./ As he was dignitary,/ and
to the depth of hen-peckery./ Now off the vexation of worldly affairs,/ oft on the drift, and all for book cares:/ A bushel of
water who could spare / to revive the fish in the wheel-rut there? (Cold Mountain Poem. 111)

And his family life before his cloistering could he get the glimpses.

Consistently seated in Cold Mountain,/ I’ve lingered here for thirty years./ Yesterday I stole a visit at the kith and
kin,/ Most of whom had gone down into acheron. / My inch of taper is burnt and down,/ Like time that ebbs away fast./
Now to the fitful shadow of own own, /Two teardrops are slipping down. (Cold Mountain, Poem. 49)

This may be the portrayal of his mood in Cold Cave for his declining years. As for his life story, one
investigator took it from here, Cold Mountain should have been a rural bookman, with a touch of the poet of
real fiber. At first, he was an anchoret or hermit, concealing his identity, not for any imperial examination, and
professed himself to be a have-not. Such nomadism widened his sight, cognizant of more contradictions and
sufferings of the people in reality; thus, the hermit completely abjured man’s society into the mountains.
Reaching Tiantai Mountain, he settled down in Cold Cave or called Cuiping Mountain, converted from a
have-not to the Man of Cold Mountain—Withdrawn from the world at the sacrifice of his own family. At that
time, he associated himself with Riprap of the Qingguo Temple, as the fast friends. Since then, he abandoned
the miscellaneous thoughts of Confucianism and Taoism, converted to Buddhism, and the act of
home-forsaking and monastery-entering altered his name from Man of Cold Mountain into Cold Mountain. In
view of the two poems, i.e., *Who’s this indigent goliard* (Xiang, 2019, p. 120), and *His officialese wouldn’t be
any less anaemic* (p. 113), he might have failed in the imperial examinations. Subject to his poetical works,
some investigators have outlined his early years in details; however, these materials should be treated
cautiously, as we can not be sure whether all the poems were from his personal experience. Consequently, there
are many blanks in his early life to be further studied.

While Cold Mountain was buried alive in Tiantai, Riprap, his kissing friend, turned out to have been a
trailside foundling picked up by Master Fenggan of Qingguo Temple, and who, later a monk there, pursued the
same life attitude. Three of them were also called “Three Recluses” by the later generations, and their poems
were co-authored, known as *A Collection of Three Recluses*.

As his poem went, “500 five-character verses, / 79 seven-character verses,/ 21 three-character verses,
/counted up to be 600 verses” (Xiang, 2019, p. 271). 311 Cold Mountain’s poems (attached with 54 Riprap’s
poems) were embodied in *A Collection of Cold Mountain’s Poems*, compiled in a series of books on four basic
branches of literature in block-printed edition. As his poems were copied from “the stones of the wood” by the
well-meaning men, there were textural recurrences between Cold Mountain and Riprap; thus, not all the existing
poems were Cold Mountain’s, and there might be some not written by Cold Mountain himself. And more
investigators presumed a group of authors, as was viewed by Sun Changwu in his *Cold Mountain’s Story with
his Poems, “Cold Mountain’s collection was not versified by himself, but by another group, for the Man of Cold Mountain was the only one of them, or the major member” (Sun, 1987, p. 3).

The poetic ideas of Cold Mountain were variegated, as were stated, “it’s Confucian but not Confucian, not Confucian but Confucian; it’s Taoist but not Taoist, not Taoist but Taoist; it’s Buddhist but not Buddhist, not Buddhist but Buddhist; it’s secular but not secular, not secular but secular” (Wei, 1998, p. 34). It content can be roughly classified into two categories, viz. secular poems and sacred poems, though not sharply differentiated.

Secular poems predominated his earlier works, some of which were the lyrics expressing his innermost feelings, quite identical with the common scholars of the Tang Dynasty. From The people are the basis of the state (225) and Day out ten thousand li (087), his political views could be observed. As the former verse goes:

The people are the basis of the state./good as a canopy of trees over Earth./ Fecund soil owns the foliage acervate, /and the barrens are sere in their berth./The tree stubs though not bared,/ their fruits fall off the wiry branches./ To fish in a deluge on the dykes flared,/ it’s an annual extraction of profits by all batches. (Cold Mountain, Poem 087)

His people-oriented thought shows that he received Confucianism from childhood. He also hoped to realize his aspirations; yet, he was often driven from pillar to post, with a burst of indignant emotion from his soul above buttons, for instance, For the Way, so heavy in such precious loss (Cold Mountain, Poem 033), His officialese wouldn’t be any less anaemic (Cold Mountain, Poem 113), Who’s this indigent goliard (Cold Mountain Poem 120), and Alas! Sick and in straits (Cold Mountain, Poem 174), etc.

One fitted for so goodly stature/ may be aucourant in all six arts./ North or south tramps such creature,/ east or west he hastily parts./ Gone like a floating duckweed,/ he’s gone like a bitter fleabane./ If you ask who is he so beleed,/ he’s named as destitution, not arcane. (Cold Mountain, Poem 148)

We do not have any clue whether it is the self-portrait of Snow Mountain, whose story of life must have been conceivably contained.

Affectionate and sensitive, Cold Mountain had once a deep affection for his own families and friends, such as, Brethren live in Five Commanderies (Cold Mountain, Poem 6), which was a look back to his native place, and Last spring warbled (Cold Mountain, Poem 180), a deeper thought about his brother. The next poem spoke to the heart in particular:

Yestereve, I saw my homing in dream,/ and my wife who was spinning, and/ Halted her shuttle meditatively, aheam,/ and took it so frail as she’d beseem./ Calling out to her, she faced round,/ and didn’t know me from Adam./ My absence over years is bound/ up with her locks discolored beyond. (Cold Mountain, Poem 134)

This poem was written many years after he had lost himself in the hollows. Was his home still there? Was his wife still alive? It remained unknown. The whole face authorized by time had been altered, and she could scarcely recognise him even in their reunion. And yet, there was the fact of life through the passing of the years,—a lasting tribute to his memory about his wife. Such a dream at one night revealed the tips of his white-haired, innermost heart of woes that lived out of the world into the Cold Cave: as a matter of fact, he could never leave off longing for what he once owned though far-flung.

His poems also depicted the stripling scenes of life, the rather, of a bevy of young ladies, such as,

Paired off for lotus flowers (050), A dolly bird plays wantonly (061), In the third month, silkworms are still small (035), and Dolce far niente yesterday. (Cold Mountain, Poem 131)
Paired off for lotus flowers,/ easy on eye in the clear river:/ Dusk slips unto the sight-seers,/ which repeatedly blusters./ Lovebirds are cupped by the breakers/ poppling with speckled mallards on water./ Taking up my abode in the banca,/ my emotion melts into the brimming river. (Cold Mountain, Poem 50)

His love of life brimmed over with the poems. By contrast, in some other poems about a bit of fluff, such as, *Mid pearled curtains of Marble Hall* (Cold Mountain, Poem 13), *An urban exciting eyeful* (Cold Mountain, Poem 14), *Aglowed with health, the Lu’s lady* (Cold Mountain, Poem 24), the blithe youth was ephemeral, and the king of terrors would put a stop to all glorious things. Now the next poem was belauded by Chu His as “perfectly gorgeous, but hard-lived for the poet.” See *Quotations of Chu His* (Vol. 140).

An urban exciting eyeful/ tinkles with the jade artful./ By the parrot, like bloom bonny,/ sublunarily, arpeggio touch’d artfully. / Her slow song resounds and prolongs/ her smart pumps beckon all throngs./ Faith, no count for it long,/ for a lotus ne’er harden off so strong. (Cold Mountain, Poem 14)

Such incalculable sighs about life were plangent repeatedly in his secular poems, as the result of his brooding on the meaning of life, which was also the final approach to Buddhahood.

And there were a considerable number of poems allegorized about secularity. With equanimity he looked on the whoop-de-do society, compared to the currish fighting over food.

I saw a hundred dogs or so,/ rumpled, tousled, and straggled./ Those stayed down would stay so,/ those who strutted would strut so./ A bone once bunged, / they bared their teeth in a snarl./ So few ever bunged,/ To go around so bunged. (Cold Mountain, Poem 58)

Here, he expressed his bitter discontentment over the unequal distribution of wealth, commiserated with the poor who cut corners.

Frolic fops in rotunda are/ irradiated under glorious lanterns./ Those without the candles here/ are open to the aureole all where./ Unawares, they get the bounce,/and have to return to darkle./ Benefic and aglisten, why flounce?/ bemazed, spared sheens do bechance. (Cold Mountain, Poem 104)

He also rebutted and beshrewed the cupidity of the rich:

Hectically, a son of fortune/ took some beating hastily./ Bread baskets were musty,/ not lendable, so scanty./ Hourly to rap and rend,/ he crossed off best firstly./ To the last extremity,/ Flies were his mourners only. (Cold Mountain, Poem 37)

The animadverting upon the decadent snobbishness of human relationships involved his personal impressions. He saw how money was writhing the intimacy of the human relations.

Every is kin to the rich man,/ who never wants for money and grain./ Blood relations dissolve out poverty and obscurity,/ which involves not a lack of full brothers in reality. (Cold Mountain, Poem 124)

And he thus he wrote:

North town, an old party’s named Zhong/ galore with the viands in his house./ When his wife went the way of all flesh of her own,/ the hall spilt over with the mourners, of course./ When he himself passed in his marble,/ there was none who was reduced to tears./ How those who’d been over the bowl/ were so bestialized and desensitized with leers! (Cold Mountain, Poem 140)
Such stories had been repeated over and over again in his past life, and chanted in his literary works, but they did not lose their fresh senses. He had an abhorrence of those who disliked the poor and cherished the rich, or judged people solely by their appearance: Yesterday, in the parlor, she paced behind in gaberdine. Only for the beat-up skirts that’d flatter, she had to eat his scran (Cold Mountain, Poem 43). Inasmuch as he himself had ever had such experiences:

I live in the hamlet,/ loveliest as they blazon it./ Yesterday to the town,/ I was dogged all along./ Pants loathed to be scrimped,/ clothes to be long cramped./ Vulture eyed, now seeled,/ finch-danced, barefaced. (Cold Mountain, Poem 223)

Not cold-eyed, Cold Mountain encored the herds earnestly with the “Is” and “Is-NOT,” only for a better life. He tipped them off to the indolence of—“In spinning are faineant the women,/ and in troweling are lurdan the men” (Cold Mountain, Poem 73). And he laid claim to educating the children, “A boy if uncultured/ is nowhere near a rat honored” (Cold Mountain, Poem 219) And “Given birth to many girls,/ to the harangues one birls” (Cold Mountain, Poem 175) He advocated reading and writing:

Study do spare survival,/ study do spare poverty./ Lettered and cultural/ ahead of others aplenty./ Man handicapped by illiteracy,/ is fit home nowhere at all./ Bitter wort in garlic sauce if thou affy/ little knows if it’s bitter or biting for you. (Cold Mountain, Poem 208)

And he also imparted the way to wealth:

Man! Resigned not to poverty./ A cold purse should finance wisely./ To have been raised one cow,/ five calves could come now./ And once more out calving,/ cattle numbers would be unfailing./ Worded to Fan Li the zillionaire,/ ‘Tis a nip and tuck over there. (Cold Mountain, Poem 132)

His persuasion was little short of pedantry. Whereas in other instances, he tended to exert a saving influence upon the people with Buddhist doctrines. Nevertheless, as a lowest intellectual, Snow Mountain maintained close ties with the people’s lives, and the role as a public mentor made his poems different from other bookmen both in content and form.

Cold Mountain spent most of his life in seclusion. At first, he lived seclusively with his family in the countryside, but later, in the thatch hut of Cold Cave alone. He left many poems of a hermit, such as:

With carrying-on lute and books,/ what boots it to rank and salary!/ Back of grandeurs with wise wife looks,/ and a good child as the dicky./ Backwinded, the wheat field is sunned,/ brimful, the piscina is fecund./ Constantly mindful of the little wren thinned/ To one cozy spot be bound. (Cold Mountain, Poem 5)

A geek in jacal / has exiguous wagons and horses before the door./ To silent woods are the birds aggregable,/ in wide bends are the fish concealable./ With son for fruit-plucking o’er the hillside,/ with wife to hoe the billabong./ What’s domiciliary alongside?/ Only books all over my bed. (Cold Mountain, Poem 27)

Such a life and poems were reminiscent of Tao Yuanming’s bucolic, by hoeing, picking fruits with his wife and children, and pressing on with his studies. However, the most numerous and distinctive poems of seclusion were those of his later period—the poems of Cold Cave period. Crossing the plains, the river ruffled wide (Cold Mountain, Poem 263), one worthful, famed mountain (Cold Mountain, Poem 264), rareing far into the sky (Cold Mountain, Poem 266), and Red Hill, so skyev (Cold Mountain, Poem 195), etc., were all the praise for Tiantai Mountain.
Red Hill, so skyey,/ Five Peaks, dwarfed afar./ Ticky-tack pagodas, tiered on the crags greeny,/ And the old shrine of
the temple soars to the rainbow lofty./Pine needles, waved around Red Town comely,/ Mid-cliff, foggy and astray in the
way of immortal./ Into the azur’d vault, 1 000 peaks are crowned immeasurably,/ and the running vines are molten into
the streams successionally. (Cold Mountain, Poem 195)

From a vantage point, this poem described and obtained the panoramic view of Tiantai Mountain, which
was full of grand vigor, as one of the fewer poems with seven characters to a line. Comparatively, his life and
feelings in Cold Cave were recorded in more poems:

Into those peaks I’ve been augural,/ thru the path, uncouth and abapical./ Wherever is the court in evidence?/ hidden
rocks are in cumulous abidance./ For several years to be abiding here,/ palingenetic springs and winters I’d bear./
Worded to the rich and great,/ a reclame shoes the goosing agate. (Cold Mountain, Poem 2)

White clouds at ease,/ never pay the peaks./ Dangerous down, on sticks,/ abrupt up, on bines as it is./ Gully pines are
evergreen,/ creek stones blobbed naturally./ Friends cloistered as it’d be/ Spring comes, tweets atween. (Cold Mountain,
Poem 222)

Cold Mountain freaky in deeper nook/ gets prostrated with fear to climbers./  Moonlit water with a glinting look,/windblown, grass howls and animates all-overs./ On fadable wintersweets, snow-flowers bloom,/ upon deadwood, clouds
come into leaf./ Out in the rain, life’s vividly abloom,/ not set-fair, all could be totally deaf. (Cold Mountain, Poem 154)

The way to Cold Cave was thick and thin, out of the reach of humane kind. Living in privacy all the year
round, the poet spurned the pomp of the world. The two lines “On fadable wintersweets, snow-flowers bloom,/upon deadwood, clouds come into leaf” were quite a delicate touch, honoring the faded winter with an
enlivened tint of spring; and the line “Out in the rain, life’s vividly abloom” spake that spring was arriving, and
all were coming around again—from which, the readers could experience the vigorous force of life in his heart.
Naturally, the power of reclusion fain in Cold Cave for decades, with his gnoses about Buddhism, cast away
with these poems, fallen into the sacred poetry.

Tiantai Mountain, famed for Taoism, was also a Mecca for Buddhists. During his retreat in Cold Cave, he
was conditioned by Taoistic and Buddhistic elements,—a divine process of psychological changes in many
poems. He also excoriated the Taoism with its priests, yet not religiously poetic, only allegorized with other
religious poems as a convenience. As a dabbler in Taoism, it was not long, and these lines “Hold a fairy tome
or two that suit/ a susurrant breath neath the trees” (Cold Mountain, Poem 16) and “Below it, one flecked with
grey-hair/ jabbers out the Taoist canon there” (Cold Mountain, Poem 20) were, more or less, his self-narration.
And one more poem:

Literary in untamed passion,/ you’re burly, hefty, and portly./ Life is short, and/ afterlife, flaysome and spooky./From of old, So much runs the tale/ that’s but resigned to anything./ Come to the white clouds so hale,/ and teach you a
cloistered sing. (Cold Mountain, Poem 19)

“Cloistered sing” was legendarily written by the Four Elders of Shangshan of the late Qin Dynasty, also
used to refer to a fairy song. Verged towards a chance of Taoism, Cold Mountain still could not submit to the
numbered tangles of life. In the end, he realized the fantasticality of the Taoist method of far sight and long life,
as a bare-knuckled discloser:

I in Yunxia Temple yesterday/ saw a Taoist unexpectedly./ In star chaplets, and moon cassock./ yond clouds, biding
in backblock./ I consulted how to be immortal,/ or to emulate him above all./ He adjudged the supreme spirit/ had its
miraculous cure in it./ Coming firm on crane deified,/ all said gone by fish sanctified./ So I went back to grass roots,/ to speculate on it’s in wrong boots./ An arrow into sky discharged,/ in a wink, out down it faged./ Even though to the Immortal Land,/ it’s like death-watch ghost at the end./ Be your heart the moon round, bright,/ of all manifestations, who’d backlight?/ About the alchemy for further details,/ the internal, original spirit on the scales./ Never did a Yellow Turban,/ as apish styliser where twas acheronian. (Cold Mountain, Poem 248)

Apperceived by “Be your heart the moon round, bright,/ of all manifestations, who’d backlight,” etc., Cold Mountain might have attained to Buddhahood by this time, with which to criticize Taoism. He also drew a bead on the monks:

In life, there’s a hat manner of man/ who may be a standing joke./ Out at elbows in religion, and/ they beguile the time, for the Way bespoke./ In sakaya, though,/ it houses more obligate fleas./ Back better go,/ pure-witted as it is. (Cold Mountain, Poem 286)

Such repudiation on their vulgarity connoted no gainsay to Buddhism, however, betrayed his affection for the “king of heart” or the pure-witted state, as his reflex sense of a hermit. And his belief in Buddhism grew more devoted with his age, disparate from his final disdain for Taoism. Since Hui-nang founded the Southern Sect of Zen, Buddhism was dissected into the religious sect and the teaching sect, which was of the Chinese style Cold Mountain’s poems were thought to have got at the core of the samādhi of Zen, not precluding some other preaches to the teaching sect. For instance,

Former spirit governed by imbecility/ won’t comprehend what’s this-worldly./ This life so deep in beggary/ must be of another life inevitable corollary./ This life, if still in promiscuity,/ another life will retain its facsimile./ On the banks, no vessel back to safety:/ to cross the river is like a dream shadowy. (Cold Mountain, Poem 41)

Without doubt, it was a Buddhist sermon to attribute the penury of all flesh to the refusal of the self-improvement in a previous existence, and to urge the poor to cultivate their fortunate blessings in another life. Another poem about keeping away from any meat of slaughtered creatures:

Message to the carnivore:/ never bog down to devour./ This life, seeded in the past,/ next life, cultivated now if to ast./ Only for what’s now delectable,/ but for next life he’d not quail./ Like a rat into the rice urn,/ tho primed, no way to return. (Cold Mountain, Poem 269)

The purpose of this poem was the same as that of the previous one. And there were many similar poems about ahimsa and predacity, such as Pitifully, all flesh in misery (Cold Mountain, Poem 207), The swine were anthropophagous (Cold Mountain, Poem 70), In the rabble rout for the fish (Cold Mountain, Poem 95), and Buy the meat so gory (Cold Mountain, Poem 186). In a meager and crude way, such poems of Cold Mountain were explicit, that was an actual form of the Buddhist beliefs as the folk custom of the Tang Dynasty.

The zen sect asserted the discovery of nature to the tenet of becoming a Buddha without word. Cold Mountain wrote some Zen poems, such as: Message to the virtuous,/ what again avowed to the truth?/ For the wise way, so conspicuous/ and self-natured, ‘tis Tathāgata so congruous./ Perfect is the law of nature,/ practice and proof would be de drop./ For the branches the trunk barter,/ it is really a lean-witted gawker. (Cold Mountain, Poem 239)

The born, worthful Buddha-nature/ Closes its door on a partner./ To beat up for it, it’s inaccessible,/ In or out, no way to be accostable./ Deflatable, it’s in the very heart,/ Ductile, it is in all part./ Believe it or not,/ You meet, but you greet not. (Cold Mountain, Poem 161)
The “born Buddha-nature” in the second poem was the “self-natured” in the first, viz., all living creatures were enlightened by Buddhism. What the Zen sect quarried was “For the wise way, so conspicuous and self-natured,” which would attain enlightenment. Such characteristics of a Buddha’s nature could not be held fast without practice and proof, which “would be de drop.” Artistically, his zen poems were not great works; however, those awakening to truth could create a sort of aegis philosophically in their specific portrayal, with a deep-going edification and a long-stretched cud of possessive memories. Such as:

My heart is like the autumn moon,/ in the clear blue of the pool./ Out of all comparison,/ What are my exact words too? (Cold Mountain, Poem 51)

It was the Buddhist idiom to use the bright moon as a metaphor for a pure mind. In klesāvarana or a barrier of vexation, such a pure mind was like the bright moon blocked by the drift of clouds, and so one could not behold the Buddha-nature within himself. “It is like a full, cloudless moon, which releases from the bonds, true in attaining to vision; and therefore, such an extricator must be Tathagata.” (Nirvāṇa Sūtra Vol. V). Here the poet’s blue pool and fall moon were free of dust and distracting thoughts, in a great flood of light for the mind-nature,—the highest realm of Zen to purify the soul of readers, with unlimited reveries. Thus, the repeated image of bright moon in his poems had the same implied meaning:

Deep night was with the stars spangled,/ lamped by one moon hanging aureoled./ Tried not to burnish a crowned glory,/ what was behung above my heart must be. (Cold Mountain, Poem 200)

On millennial stones the ancients trailed,/ afore abysmal cliff its was all maya./ In silver moon, a full light never failed,/ wasted no time on any inquiry so eager. (Cold Mountain, Poem 201)

Such savvying pervaded in his poems of retirement in Cold Cave. Cold Mountain and Cold Cave, with the character and nature, fitted in with each other perfectly, reaching the stage of the Zen. This was where such Cold poems could have been ravishing forever and a day. For instance:

Since the being of Cold Mountain,/ tens of thousands of years elapsed./ Just gone where woodbine twineth that lapsed,/ and footloose to roam or rest, if glimpsed./ Out of hail by Cold Cave,/ the dull, white weight of clouds oft slid swiftly./ And on slender grass bed, laid down softly,/ with azured vault, tucked in cosily./ So airily, reclining on the stone,/ I was left to the tender mercy of the world agone. (Cold Mountain, Poem 164)

In his world, there were only Cold Cave and white cloud, fine grass and blue sky, and one poet who lived with the fate. Let the world go, he would sleep on stones, free and happy; and when merged with the nature, the poet seemed to have molten into the internal soul of Cold Cave.

His poems were endowed with the basic trend though motley. In quest of the connotations from each line, the Buddhists strained the sense, no doubt; yet the Buddhism upon the leading part in his poems was undeniable. His lyric reflections were confided to the fugacious interjections about life, and his Buddhist faith took shape in his breadth of view about the sympathy admonishingly, and also in his meditation on and understanding of the retreated truth; consequently, his poems have been rated as palmary fruit in the Chinese poetry on Buddhism.

There are existentially over fifty poems of Riprap, a few of which are interfluent with Cold Mountain’s. Brought up in Qingguo Temple, his life was simple, and his poems were Buddhistic basically, within the extent of Cold Mountain in its gaining momentum.
The gustoes of Cold Mountain’s poems were also diversified. *Records of Easy Encampment* was quoted by *General Catalogue for the Complete Library of Four Branches of Books* about the poems of Cold Mountain, which were “rhetorical, cursory, haughty, or jocular; and his lines—’Labor not with Zheng’s annotations, let alone Mao’s commentary,’—was like the utterance of a Confucian scholar, and also the saying of Buddha, or the words of Bodhisattva” (Iriya, 1989, p. 207). His vulgarized poems, in the main, were mostly written in vernacular description and argumentation, but in vulgar language. And his reclusive poems were more like a panorama and took particular trouble to create the artistic conception of Zen. It was the general style of Cold Mountain’s poems that set aside the measured forms, expressed his feelings frankly and freely. This style was later called “Cold Mountain Style.”

Cold Mountain had such a degree of traditional taste that Wang Yinglin of the Song Dynasty in his *Records of Painstaking Students* (Vol. XVIII) said, “Cold Mountain’s poems depicted the two sons of the Shi’s which was cited from *Lieh Tzu*, and also Yang Hu’s crane reputed to be good at dance, but was unable to do so when called for, which was cited from *New Anecdotes of Old Episodes*. He bore a strong resemblance to Zhuan Sunshi, Jū Fuzai, Zhu Ru or the midget from Facts about Dongfang Shuo in A History of the Han Dynasty,—rather than the mere use of the Buddhist language” (Wang, 1935, p. 36). The classical allusions from the Confucian classics, history, philosophy and belles-letters were often used in his poems. Yoshitaka Iriya the Japanese scholar noted particularly, “The ancient poems for those of his Wei-Jin style were literally collected in *Literary Selections*” (Xiao, AD. 526-531, p. 41). Buddhist allusions were frequently poetized by him, such as:

One tree was budded before the wood, / twice as high as it should. / Its root produced a revulsion, / its leaves were gnarled for mutation. / Arrived by its fading, faded apparel, / but no ruth for the grains of its bowel. / All barks having been exfoliated / only left its pure truth so appreciated. (Cold Mountain, Poem 155)

The last two lines were probably a fine parody of Wei Yan’s much-quoted phrase “A tree of its bark though bare is anow yet living in the truth” (Pu, AD.952, p. 4). In fact, “Outside the village, there was a śāla grove, which had a tree, grown earlier up now to a hundred years. By the time, the grove owner doused it with water, and headed it down momentarily. And after all of its barks, branches and leaves had fallen off the bedraggled veteran, only the truth was left to be attested. So that’s the full extent of Tathāgata—though all the built-in obsolescence had been relieved, the whole law of truth was still there” (*Nirvana Sutra* (Vol. 39). The allusions of Cold Mountain from *Nirvana Sutra* was never a repo. And he could also pick the Buddhist allusions with facility and ease in *Saddharmapundarika Sutra, Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa and surangama-sutra*, etc.

With his admonished poems, Cold Mountain was also the direct succedder of the free verses in vulgar Chinese of the Tang Dynasty represented by Wang Fanzhi, in a very close approximation to the vulgar style. Some of their themes and subjects were conformable, i.e., *My east neighbour is a quean* by Cold Mountain, compared with *My house was ever in the chips* by Wang Fanzhi. For Cold Mountain,

“My east neighbour is a quean, / in the chips for a mere 3 to 5 years, / Elder times, depauperate than I’ve been, / she now takes the mickey at my cold purse, / Her catcall recurs after me, / my wry pucker bears it before her. / Free and unfettered, so cross banteringly, / east or west, it may be fickle to prosper. (Cold Mountain, Poem 36)

For Wang Fanzhi,
“My house was ever in the chips,/ while yours had not a shirt to the back./ And now you’re tolerably well-to-do,/ bearing some analogy to my past./ But now I’m false to my backward of time,/ and very much erst alike to you./ The pity of it, such good boots/ should have worn out their soles (Cold Mountain, Poem 293). Cold Mountain’s poem “Now I have a short jacket” and “Wang Fanzhi’s “Too poor to be vested well.” Cold Mountains Poem: “Now I have a short jacket/neither of silks nor of satins./ Venture to ask the color of it, nor neither red nor violet./ Summer, served as a shirt,/ winter, used to be a quilt./ Summer or winter, it’s alter and apert,/ a longer habit as I’d assert. (Cold Mountain, Poem 82)

Wang Fanzhi’s poem:

“Poor house, poor dress,/ a wadded jacket was sewn./ Frayed rugs stuffed up in it,/ with the cloth for a lining.// Of holy yet merry poverty,/ afortiori turbid for the rich and great./ Day, cast it on and go,/ night, under it for slumber. (Cold Mountain, Poem 64)

Some poems were similar in the expressive techniques, such as the swine-man contrast in The swine were anthropophagous by Cold Mountain, and the sheep-man contrast in My body is like the pent sheep. Cold Mountain’s poem:

“The swine were anthropophagous,/ and the men ate the chitterlings./ The swine vouchsafed to such reek barbarous,/ but the man enjoyed the yummy chitterlings./ Swine dead, pitched into the water./ men dead, they must be inhumed./ Never to swallow each other:/ A lotus flower grows in the seethings so plumed. (070) Wang Fanzhi’s poem: “My body is like the pent sheep,/ required like for like./ The sheep walk with their wool,/ with which I am clad well. Stripped for a bare-assed stand,/ my figure’s not the sheep’s equal:/ Every day, sheep must die,/ every day, man must also die:/ Caught aboringe,/ the fat sheep taste dainty./ Hard scrabbled, the sheep die:/ once gone, the man’s never maimed:/ once dead, gone with it,/ gone the soul to other climes./ Rich as croesus, do more good:/ then eat well, and dress well./ Schmoes go sinning widely,/ while sophists like reasoning.” (Cold Mountain, Poem 4)

The peculiar designing should have been few and far in the literary poems. After Wang Fanzhi, Cold Mountain should be the most important poet of the free-style verse in the vernacular of the Tang Dynasty.

Cold Mountain’s poems had no social impact at that time, simply circulated in the Buddhist temples, and were sometimes quoted when the masters of meditation ascended to the hall. Down to the Song Dynasty, his poems found the kindred spirit. For example, Huang Tingjian had a special interest in the vernacular poetry school of the Tang Dynasty, including Cold Mountain’s; Wang Anshi also wrote 20 Poems Imitated in Riprap’s Style; Su Shi, Lu You and Zhu Xi also alluded to his poems, in that the content and style of Cold Mountain’s poems were in consistent with the social trend of thought in the Song Dynasty. Nevertheless, in a long era, his poems were mainly read by the monasteries, claiming no place in orthodox literature. Until the 1930s, Hu Shi, et al., advocated the vernacular literature, his poems came into their own academically. Yet these poems hung by the wall with the rise of the Anti-Japanese War.

However, such poems had quite an eminent fate abroad. For the last centuries, these poems have been valued and canonized in Japan. Between the 1950s and 1960s, they were idolized by the depressed youth known as the Beat Generation in the United States, for which Cold Mountain was adorned with all the splendor. Although the “Cold Mountain’s Fever” in the west has had its day, his poems in the world literature has been established. But the return of the fever has come under the appreciation of and investigation by the compatriots over again. He had such a poem:
My poems meet sardonic satisfaction, though having come up to elegancy. Labor not with Zheng’s annotations, let alone Mao’s commentary. Grieve not to be unfrequented, ME, few know and few care. For a lash-up rhyme augmented, my brain will be afflicted there. By chance to meet the sharp eyes, They’ll catch on it under the skies. (Cold Mountain, Poem 305)

This prophesy has been actualized, and his solitary poems (all the above-italicized in this paper are translated into English by Wu Songlin the author himself) have felt the length and breadth of the world. Yet the mystery behind his legendary experience has been open to further quests.

Conclusion

What’s Cold Mountain? Down the ages, he’s been known as a have-not and a kook. Like an indigent burnout, he breathed every phrase salted with modest personality musingly, back of the hidden way, that ensured its operational security. He had a birch-bark on the head, clad in rags, and in wooden sandals. After this fashion, he perfectly retired from the world, to eschew an acculturation from the congeners. And tut-tut, he belted out his notes on the transmigration of souls of the three realms. Rustically, he balladed and bantered with the cowboys; and reverse or direct, his convivial nature couldn’t be dawned upon, except sageness.

And so, such prophesy was ever actualized, and his solitary poems have felt the length and breadth of THIS world. Yet the mystery behind his legendary experience has been open to further quests.

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