

Spurned by philosophers*

Han Shan†

TRANSLATED BY *Span Hanna*‡

I. Living and dying

庄子说送终， An old sage¹ said, when his time came to die
天地为棺槨。 to lay his coffin between the earth and sky.
吾归此有时， When this occasion comes around for me,
唯须一幡箔。 a reed mat on a pole is all I'll need.
死将谓青蝇， From my corpse the green flies will get a feed,
吊不劳白鹤。 the white crane easily sing a eulogy.
饿著首阳山， What's left, dump on a hillside in the sun.
生廉死亦乐。 Living and dying turn out to be just as much fun.

* These translations were first published as poems 15, 30, 277, and 292 in Han Shan, *Songs from Cold Mountain*, transl. Span Hanna (Norwood, South Australia: Moon Arrow Press, 2019), 38, 53, 315, 330.

† Han Shan (est. 720-810 CE), literally 'Cold Mountain', was a Chinese Buddhist poet and recluse. Whether he was a real person or Han Shan is merely a pen name is not known. He likely lived in Tiantai, Zhejiang Province, China.

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II. Spurned by philosophers

智者君抛我，
愚者我抛君。
非愚亦非智，
从此继相闻。
入夜歌明月，
侵晨舞白云。
焉能住口手，
端坐鬢纷纷。

By gentleman philosophers I'm spurned,
and I, acting the fool, spurn them in turn.
Neither knowing nor a fool, indeed,
our mutual discourse can from here proceed.
The shining moon becomes the song of night,
dawn's approach the dance of clouds so white.
Thus with the simplest needs do I get by,
crosslegged, wild hair waving at the sky.

III. On the wheel

自古诸哲人，
不见有长存。
生而还复死，
尽变作灰尘。
积骨如毗富，
别泪成海津。
唯有空名在，
岂免生死轮。

Of all the philosophers of ancient times,
not one has ever attained longevity.
No sooner born than heading back to death,
becoming dust and ash their destiny.
Their bones are piled as high as Mt Meru,²
their farewell tears become a flooding sea.
All that is left here is an empty name.
The wheel of birth and death—where can one flee?

IV. Those keen on philosophy

我见利智人，
观著便如意。
不假寻文字，
直入如来地。
心不逐诸缘，
意根不妄起。
心意不生时，
内外无馀事。

I look at those keen on philosophy,
who comprehend all that they contemplate.
Perusing written records ceaselessly,
the Buddha-ground they easily penetrate.
The mind is not attached to what it seeks,
and thus no wayward notions can arise.
When the sense of mind does not appear,
no excess things appear, inside, outside.

Notes

- 1 *Old sage*: Zhuangzi or Chuang-tzu (c. 369-286 BCE) was a Daoist philosopher.
- 2 *Mt Meru*: sacred mountain, the axis of the world.