CHAPTER V

The influence of Chan thoughts in Han Shan’s style of writing

In this chapter, attempts will be made to explore (with illustrations), the style of writing in Han Shan’s poems. Han Shan’s Chan poems will be cited fully or partially and analysed under two categories:

(i) remote and empty ( jijing kongling 寂静空灵 )

(ii) distant and light ( chongdan youyuan 冲淡幽远 )

(i) remote and empty

As we have already seen, some of the poets representing the Chan sect wrote poems which were full of Chan thoughts. Han Shan himself evidently had no small part in this. For him, the association between nature and Buddhism is far from fortuitous. He embarked on a life of perpetual drifting since he was in his mid-thirties. He wondered from one place to another and finally settle down in Cold Mountain for the remaining years of his life. It was during this time
Buddhism especially Chan sect, was wholly accepted by him. His faith in Buddhism determined his life destiny and defined the orientation of his poetry. His poems were written based on very high artistic conception, which was to a certain extent due to his experience in Chan. Chan sect sought for calmness, peace and above all, a well cultivated mind. This freedom of the mind influenced Han Shan’s aesthetic consciousness and brought his poems to a magnificent height. He combined his experience of Chan with the natural scenery in Cold Mountain and through a superb skill of writing, produced some poems which are rich with “the state of Chan” (chanjing 神境). For example:

** Long, long the way to the Cold Mountain;  
沓沓寒山道  
Stony, stony the banks of the chill stream.  
落落泠涧滨  
Twitter, twitter- always there are birds;  
啾啾常有鸟  
Lorn and lone- no human but oneself.  
寂寂更无人  
Slip, slap the wind blows in one’s face;  
淅淅风吹面  
Flake by flake the snow piles on one’s clothes.  
纷纷雪积身  
Day after day one never sees the sun;  
朝朝不见日  
Year after year knows no spring.  
岁岁不知春
This poem describes the solitude and deserted atmosphere of the Cold Mountain. Here, Han Shan chooses appropriate terms to describe the scenery and the tranquil state that is prevalent there. He uses repetitions (two words with the same sound [diezi 叠字]) in each line to emphasize the charming, peaceful and quiet scenery.

“Long, long” (yao yao 呦呦) describes the deep and secluded atmosphere present at the Cold Mountain. “Stony, stony” (luolu 落落) describes the state of coldness and loneliness present at the streams around the mountains. The third and fourth lines are similar to Wang Ji’s (王籍) famous line “the chirp of the birds increase the quietness of the mountains” (niaoming sangengyou 鸟鸣山更幽).¹ The words “lorn and lone” (jiji 寂寂) in the fourth line is enough to create the mood of quietude and desolation. The following lines however depict the sound of blowing wind (“slip, slap” [xixi 渐渐]) and the snowflakes flutter about (“flake by flake” [fenfen 纷纷]). “Snow piles on one’s clothes” reveals the state of a lonely recluse (who is the poet himself present at the scene), meditating throughout the year, day in and day out. He mentions this in the lines seven and eight: “day after day”

¹ Wang Ji (王籍). "Ru Ruo Xie Xi" (入若邪溪). A Complete Liang Poems (Quan Liangshi 全梁诗), in Quan Han Sanguo Jin Nanbeichao Shi (全汉三国晋南北朝诗), Zhonghua Shuju (中华书局), 1959, Vol.2, juan 10, p.1178.
It is important to point out here that in this poem Han Shan applies the technique of contrast to express the atmosphere of 'noise in silence' (jing zhong yu dong 静中寓动). The contrast successfully brings out the quietness and the almost quiet but subtle noise present around the mountain area. The line "lorn and lone - no human but oneself" tells the readers of an experience in a deep and quiet situation. The quietness is of such a quality that the readers won't even be able to hear their own heart beat. At that precise moment, the whole universe vanishes behind a blanket of quietness and solitude. In the following lines, the sound of the flowing mountain streams, birds twittering and wind blowing, once again sets off by contrast, the atmosphere of solitude present at the Cold Mountain. Such an artistic description of the atmosphere of the Cold Mountain shows the poet's skill, which is most definitely an influence of Chan. This is because, in the term of Chan, solitude does not mean deathly stillness, but in solitude consists the vitality of life. Zhong Baihua (宗白华) says:

"Chan is the quietness in motion, and motion is in quietness. In quietness there is always action and in that action, there is always solitude and quietness. It is one and the same. It penetrates the very essence of life. Chan is when the Chinese come into contact with the Mahāyāna Buddhism. Knowing one's own mind, they give free rein to
philosophy and the state of art. The silent action and the splendid life, form two sides of the art. Which is but the situation of the mind."^2

As a follower of Chan, Han Shan is very sharp in his observation. He uses his sharp observation to evoke the state of motion in silence very appropriately in the above poem. He also uses his sharp artistic views to select the most representative objects of the scenery and transform them into lines with the use of a simple language. He uses "mountain", "stream", "wind" and "snow". All these objects blend together and form a beautiful, quiet and also a picturesque landscape of the Cold Mountain. Chen Huijian praises this poem and remarks that it is:

"beautiful like fairyland, quite like the everlasting, deep and tranquil like old monastery, desolate like the desert."^3

Lai Hanping ( 赖汉屏 ) however in “Tangshi Jianshang Cidian” ( 唐诗鉴赏辞典 ) says:

"The use of repetitive words by Han Shan in this poem is varied because of the change in the words used. (yaoyao 吟沓 ) evokes the feeling of darkness, (luoluo 落落 ) evokes the feeling of spaciousness and blankness. (jutjut 嗦嗽 ) tells about the sound, ( jiji 寂寂 ) tells

^2 Zong Baihua ( 宗白华 ), Meixue Sanbu ( 美学散步 ), Shanghai Renmin Chuban, 1981, p.65.

^3 Chen Huijian, op. cit., p.114.

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about noiselessness, (xīxī 迢迢) shows the moving situation of the wind and (fēn fēn 纷纷) shows the rain of snow.⁴

From the above example, we know that Han Shan used repetitive words to bring out the atmosphere of quietness and solitude in the Cold Mountain. The following lines are quoted from various poems of Han Shan that show the same inclination:

(i) Bluish-green creepers-sparingly placed, in profusion they grow;

青萝舞 青萝
Emerald-green mountain streams -
their tinkling sounds unbroken go on.

碧涧响 碧涧
Steady and slow - moreover, contented with joy;

且安然
Unhurried, at ease - they keep themselves both calm and pure.

悠悠自清闲

* (ii) The valleys are long and strewn with stones,

溪长石 溪长石
the streams broad and banked with thick grass.

洞阔草 洞阔草

* (iii) When the moon shines, the water glints and sparkles;

月照水 月照水
when the wind blows, the grasses rustle and sigh.

风吹草 风吹草

(iv) Secluded brooks - a constant gurgle and splash;

幽涧常 幽涧常
Through tall pines the wind sighs and moans...

高松风 高松风

* (v) Clouds hang about the waist of the mountain,

山腰云 山腰云

⁴ Lai Hanbing ( 赖汉屏 ), "Yooyao Han Shan Dao" ( 音音寒山道 ), in Tangshi Jianshang Cidian ( 唐诗鉴赏辞典 ), Shanghai Cishu Chubanshe ( 上海辞书出版社 ), 1983, p.7.
wind moans in the valley mouth.
谷口风

** (vi) The wind in the pine-trees makes its shrill note;
松风啸
The chatter of the birds mingles its harmony.
鸟语声

(vii) Quiet and still, a good place to peacefully live;
空空离讥诮
Empty- utterly empty,
separated from ridicule and blame.

(viii) In the distance I gaze at the lonely toad,
远望孤蟾明皎皎
shining so dazzling bright;
Nearby hear a flock of birds,
chirping away- tweet tweet.

(ix) Boulders in piles and heaps;
石磊磊
Mountains hidden and deep.

One can observe that the above quoted lines are imageries that form and paint a beautiful and picturesque surrounding like the “valleys”, “stones”, “streams”, “grass”, “moon”, “water”, “wind”, “clouds”, “mountains” and “pine-trees”. It enables us to share with him the artistic beauty described. This light, quiet, deep and calm scenery also reveals the poet’s delightful state of mind and his purity of retreat from worldly affairs.
To contemplate and to realise his nature, Han Shan preferred to live in the quiet, beautiful, deep and secluded place (Cold Mountain) that was very appropriate for such a purpose. It is also helpful to him to realise the phenomenon of change and the impermanence of life. The natural surrounding, proves to be apt for him because the contemplation of nature is also the contemplation of reality itself, as in the case of enlightenment attained through observation of nature. Some poems written by Han Shan merely display his understanding towards the impermanence and a phantasmagoria of the natural phenomenon. The following lines are however, a good example of this:

***
(i) Gone, and a million things leave no trace
Loosed, and it flows through the galaxies
A fountain of light, into the very mind-
Not a thing, and yet it appears before me:

(ii) The ten thousand forms,
as vague shadows appear in its midst,
But that one wheel- fundamentally,
Free, empty, unbounded- my soul in itself it is pure;

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Embracing the Void, I penetrate the mysterious and profound.

含虚洞玄妙

(iii) The numerous stars are spread out and arranged
    on a night that is both bright and deep,
    众星罗列夜明深
    Here in the cliffs I light just one lamp-
    the moon has not yet gone down.
    岩点孤灯月未沉

* (v) White clouds - the morning light is still;
    白云朝影静
    Moonrise - the lamp of night drifts upward.
    明月夜光浮

The poet speaks of the moon and brings to our mind the Buddhist conception of universe. He uses the moon as well as the reflection to express the flush and unending changes of all manifestations of nature. He is adept at grasping the sense of void, with his attentive style of writing and lead the readers to understand the visionary of the natural phenomenon. Above lines from various poems, thus show the same characteristics and style. The scenery described is vague and can also be distinct, but it is hard to be grasped or traced like the floating moonlight reflected on water. For this phenomenon, Gao Yuetian says:

“When his (Han Shan’s) poems describe sceneries, it is written after the enlightenment about the ephemeral that leaves hardly any impression like the floating light and passing shadow...........”

* Gao Yuetian, op.cit.
Moon is a favourite symbol in Han Shan's poems. It symbolises pureness, brightness and clearness of our mind. Han Shan thus uses it almost exclusively in the following poems to evoke Buddhist state of mind. For example:

*** (i) Spring water in the green creek is clear
           碧漉泉水清
Moonlight on Cold Mountain is white
           寒山月华白
Silent knowledge- the spirit is enlightened of itself
           默知神自明
Contemplate the void: this world exceeds stillness.
           观空境逾寂

* (ii) High, high from the summit of the peak,
           高高峰顶上
Whatever way I look, no limit in sight!
           四顾极无边
No one knows I am sitting here alone.
           独坐无人知
A solitary moon shines in the cold spring.
           孤月照寒泉
Here in the spring- this is not the moon.
           泉中且无月
The moon is where it always is- in the sky above.
           月自在清天
And though I sing this one little song,
           吟此一曲歌
In the song there is no Zen.
           歌终不是禅

(iii) The numerous stars are spread out and arranged
      on a night that is both bright and deep;
      众星罗列夜明深
Here in the cliffs I light just one lamp-
      the moon has not yet gone down.
      岩点孤灯夜未沉
Round and full, radiant and light;  
no need to polish this gem;  
圆满光华不磨莹  
hanging there in the blue sky, that indeed is my mind.  
挂在青天是我心

(iv) On top of rocks one thousand years old  
footprints of ancient men;  
千年石上古人踪  
In front of a one hundred thousand foot cliff,  
one spot that is empty and void.  
万丈岩前一点空  
When the bright moon shines,  
it's constantly spotless and pure;  
明月照时常皎洁  
No need to be troubled to look for someone  
to ask which way is west and which east.  
不劳寻问西东

The above four poems show the state of spiritual experience. An experience of the void and of communion with nature. As for poems (i) and (ii), the love of meditation and of scenic beauty is richly illustrated. The poet has expressed his sense of harmony and tranquillity through his meditation - he contemplates the void and nature seems to reciprocate, for the moon comes to shine on him. This image of the moon may also serve as a symbol for a sudden enlightenment occurring after a period of solitary contemplation in the darkness. The reflection of the moon just merges with the spring-water, thus revealing that the poet is able to become one with nature. It is this intimacy, this dissolution of boundaries between self and world, which has emerged as
the fundamental principle of coherence in the world of Han Shan. In the 4th line of the first poem, "void" (kong 空) and "stillness" (ji 寂) often appear in compounds, describing the universal emptiness and the tranquillity of nirvāṇa. The "no limit in sight" (wubian 无边) and "sitting alone" (duzuo 独坐) in the 2nd and 3rd lines of the second poem may also recall the space and the loneliness and solitude of the scene. "No one", "no moon", "no Zen" however, give the readers an impression as if the poet remains in constant and total seclusion. The description of nature and of the poet’s harmony with it, simply suggests the peace and tranquillity he has attained in his religious life. Poem (iii) and (iv) are two of Han Shan’s best seven word poems. In both poems, emphasis has been given to the bright and splendour, pure and clear moon which symbolises the concealed Buddha nature of the poet. A famous scholar in modern time, Yuan Xingpei (袁行霈) says:

“It is because artistic conception consists the poet’s own subjective element, the artistic conception of good poems are always individual in nature. The poet’s unique observation angle, temperament, interest and personality form the individual nature of his poems.”

Therefore, the moon itself is the incarnation of the poet, the poet seems to be signifying that through meditation, he has been able to become one

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with the moon. The last line of poem (iii), "hanging there in the blue sky, that indeed is my mind" is a famous line. It shows the close relationship between the poet and the moon. The brightness of the moon in the sky, however reflects the image of peace and tranquil state of the poet's mind. The words in poem (iv), "thousand years", "ancient men", "empty and void" however show the long period of time and space. This allows the readers room for imagination.

Some other poems regarding the moon which express the mood are as follows:

*** (i) On top of Cold Mountain the lone round moon.
寒山顶上月轮孤
Lights the whole clear cloudless sky.
照见晴空一物无

* (ii) On a bed of stone I sit, alone in the night,
石床孤月坐
While the round moon climbs up Cold Mountain.
圆月上寒山

(iii) In front of a cliff, all alone I silently sit;
岩前独静坐
The round moon brightly beams in the sky.
圆月当空耀

(iv) Seats made of straw- mountain families have these,
草座山家有
Their sole lamp, the bright wheel of the moon,
孤灯明月轮

(v) The lonely moon, throughout the long night always bright,
孤月夜长明
The round sun, constantly it comes out and shines.

圆日常来照

(vi) Your nature is like the moon—pure and clear, it is bright;  
性月澄澄朗  
Far and wide it shines without end  
廓尔照无边

* (vii) No one knows I am sitting here alone.  
独坐无人知  
A solitary moon shines in the cold spring.  
孤月照寒泉

The “lone round moon”, “round moon”, “bright moon”, “lonely moon”, “solitary moon” written by Han Shan in these poems, are but the same. They show the mood of loneliness and solitude. Certainly, the natural imagery (moon) throughout, presents a clear contrast to that of the nature of night; providing a sort of quest for relief from darkness or suffering.

Han Shan has another poem that pictures the moon, as a light that guides him in darkness. After visiting a monk, the moonlight, leads him home, as he states in this poem:

** I went off quietly to visit a wise monk,  
闲自访高僧  
Where misty mountains rose in myriad piles.  
烟山万万层  
The Master himself showed me my way back,  
师亲指归路  
Pointing to where the moon, that round lamp hung.  
月挂一轮灯
Here, unlike in the preceding poems, the moon is not only praised and upheld for its natural beauty or existence but it also acts as a friend in need that guides him home, in darkness. The image of moon, in particular, recurs in this poem to suggest a Buddhist spirituality, and the poet’s visit is in itself a spiritual experience. One might paraphrase as follows: In the first line, one must search on one’s own for the truth, and one must have the leisure to do it; in the second line, the initiate is lost in the fog, and the ascent to the truth seems unending; the third line is the Chan way in which the master is directly pointing to one’s own nature; in fourth line, my mind is enlightened, pure, bright, and complete, just like the full moon. All this were concealed by the poet by providing a spare description of the solitude and simplicity of his existence in total harmony with nature along the way back. The readers will imagine a remote monastery among the mountains, with a recluse walking in loneliness, accompanied by the shine of the moon. This is the silence and the calm of mute insensate things that Han Shan loved for its own sake. One can hardly deny that in this poem there is a feeling of quiet enjoyment and a feeling of seclusion. Xi Duanfu ( 託端甫 ) in his “The world of Han Shan”( Han Shan
points out that the mood of Han Shan's poems create a special feeling of peace, tranquillity, seclusion and the highest of spiritual experience. The atmosphere is at once attractive and charming. It is so well portrayed in his poems that, even the other four masters could not do so well.\textsuperscript{7} Another scholar Gao Yuetian states:

"Han Shan's poems are very simple in language, like spoken language, but it consists and projects a very high mood ......"

These statements, undeniably support my explanation of Han Shan's poems.

(ii) Distant and light

Seeing that Han Shan was a recluse who renounced the world and lived alone in Cold Mountain, the natural scene and the remote monastery had indeed evoked a kind of deep and calm feeling in him. This calm and deep feeling, however brings a distant and light

\textsuperscript{7} Xu Duanfu ( 舛端甫 ), "The World of Han Shan" ( Han Shan Shijie 寒山世界 ), Zhongguo Shijikan, op cit., 1972, Vol.4, juan3, p.41. The other four masters are: Wang Ji ( 王俌 ), Wang Fanzhi ( 王梵志 ), Shi De, and Feng Gan. Including Han Shan, five of them were called the masters of colloquial style of writing. ( Biaihua Shiiren 白话诗人 ) of early Tang.

\textsuperscript{8} Gao Yuetian ( 高越天 ), op.cit., p.3.
aesthetic consciousness to the poet, and causes him to produce a number of poems which reflect that very mood.

Han Shan is certainly a master in depicting scenes. In fact, Cold Mountain was his main object in writing. He is adept at using "Cold Mountain" to create the poetic state. The word "Cold Mountain" appears about thirty-four times in all his three hundred over poems. Many of them represent the distant and light sort of mood. As we can see in the poems below:

* (i) I climb the road to Cold Mountain,
    登涉寒山道
The road to Cold Mountain that never ends.
    寒山路不穷
The valleys are long and strewn with stones,
    溪长石磊磊
the streams broad and banked with thick grass.
    沟洞草蒙蒙
Moss is slippery, though no rain has fallen;
    苔滑非关雨
pines sigh, but it isn't the wind.
    松鸣不假风
Who can break from the snares of the world
    谁能超世累
and sit with me among the white clouds?
    共坐白云中

* (ii) Cold Mountain is full of weird sights;
    寒山多幽奇
people who try to climb it always get scared.
    登者皆恒惧
When the moon shines, the water glints and sparkles;
    月照水澄澄
when the wind blows, the grasses rustle and sigh.
风驱草猎猎
Snowflakes make blossoms for the bare plum,
凋梅雪作花
clouds in place of leaves for the naked trees.
兀木云充叶
At a touch of rain, the whole mountain shimmers-
触雨转鲜灵
but only in good weather can you make the climb.
非晴不可涉

* (iii) Wonderful, this road to Cold Mountain-
可笑寒山道
yet there's no sign of horse or carriage.
而无车马踪
In winding valleys too tortuous to trace,
联溪难记曲
on crags piled who knows how high,
叠嶂不知重
a thousand different grasses weep with dew
泣露千般草
and pines hum all together in the wind.
吟风一样松
Now it is that, straying from the path,
此时迷径处
you ask your shadow, "What way from here?"
形问影何踪

** (iv) A place to prize is this Cold Mountain,
可重是寒山
Whose white clouds for ever idle on their own,
白云常自闲
Where the cry of monkeys spreads among the paths.
猿啼畅道内
Where the tiger's roar transcends the world of men.
虎啸出人间
Walking alone I step from stone to stone,
独步石可履
Singing to myself I clutch at the creepers for support.
孤云藤好攀
The wind in the pine-trees makes its shrill note;
松风清飒飒

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The chattering of the birds mingled its harmony.
鸟语声官官

(v) On Han-shan there are only white clouds;
寒山唯白云
Quiet and still, cut off from the dirt and the dust.
寂寂绝埃尘
Seats made of straw - mountain families have these;
草座山家有
Their sole lamp, the bright wheel of the moon.
孤灯明月轮
My stone bed overlooks an emerald-green pool;
石床临碧沼
Tigers and deer - always my neighbours nearby.
虎鹿每为邻
I truly covet the joys of this remote life;
自羡山间乐
Forever to be a man who lives "beyond form."
常为象外人

The above poems are indeed charming and picturesque. The style is smooth and unruffled. There is no strong emotion, no striking language; neither colours to dazzle nor vigour to impress. They are not seen simply as landscape paintings, but it is by means of the image of "Cold Mountain" to express the high mental state of the poet. It thus contains the poet’s deep experience in life. If one sees from chromatology, the word "cold" evokes a cold feeling in us. Therefore, the word "Cold Mountain" itself is enough here in these

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9 Sun Qi (孙旗), Han Shan and The Hippies, op.cit., p.16.
poems to create the distant and light mood. Besides the word "Cold Mountain", the poet is good at choosing the more ethereal and exquisite images to heighten the distant and light mood. His landscape tends to be one of "endless road", "long valleys", "sparkling water", "bright moon", "bare plum", "naked trees", "white clouds", "emerald-green pool" and "sole lamp". The language is naive and simple, the colour is light and the feeling is of delight. On first reading, the reader may well be struck by the way in which the natural images seem to follow one another with no apparent linkage. The harmoniously picturesque view gives the readers an impression as well as a sense of serenity, beauty and delight. We see no traces of unnaturalness.

There is a common saying in Chan sect: "The green bamboos are of the dharmakāya, the luxuriant yellow flowers are wisdom." (qingqing cuizhu, jinshi fashen, yuyu huanghua, wufei bore 青青翠竹，尽是法身，郁郁黄花，无非般若）， which means enlightened mind is within every single green bamboo, yellow flowers, white clouds and streams. The experience of Buddhism brought a kind of aesthetic

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10 Shi Dao Yuan, "Yuezhou Dazhu Hui Hai Chanshi" ( 越州大珠慧海禅师). Records of the Transmission of the Lamp, op. cit., juan 6, p.108. The term Dharmakāya here is a sanskrit word which means the body of the law, the Buddha as the personification of truth, the essence-body.
experience to the poet. While these poems can be read as a simple description of the natural scenery in Cold Mountain, it also traces the stages of his movement toward enlightenment. For example: ‘endless road’, ‘long valleys’ in poems (i) signify the long journey of practising Buddhism. ‘Sparkling water’ in poem (ii) and ‘bright moon’ in poem (v) are symbolic of the pure and bright Buddha nature and ‘bare plum’, ‘naked trees’ in poem (ii) and ‘white clouds’ in poem (iv) and (v) thus reveal the space and emptiness of the universe. Hence the elusiveness and profundity of a recluse is well disguised by the deceptively simple words used in each poem above.

These poems are highly acclaimed not only because of the distant and light mood presented to the reader, but also because of their effective use of conventional metaphor. Yet a person without keen perception would not be able to detect them and a poet without supreme technique would not be able to describe them. The poet blends the four elements - water, air, earth and light in each poem, with the character “寒山” (Han Shan or Cold Mountain). The reader is left with a cold and desolate impression. Sun Qi (孙旗) in his book entitled “Han Shan and
The Hippies” (Han Shan Yu Xipi 寒山与西皮), made the remark below:

"The character “寒山” (Han Shan or Cold Mountain), no matter how the poet uses in his poems either to indicate the poet himself, the Cold cliff or his mind image, are all managed to heighten the pureness and the state of his poetry."\(^{11}\)

It is very unique that the word “Cold Mountain” was presented in the opening line of each of the poems. They are apparently written without any effort. Indeed, they display various shades and levels. The first two lines of poem (i) and (ii), 'the never ending' road to Cold Mountain and 'the weird sights' of the Cold Mountain, thus imply that the way to realise the mind is long and full of mystery and profundity. People who try to walk in this spiritual path, always get scared of its profound mystery. In poem (iii), the first two lines "wonderful, this road to Cold Mountain - yet there’s no sign of horse or carriage" outwardly describe the deep and secluded state of Col Mountain. But when analysed in detail, one may find that the Col Mountain here implies "the mind" and this mind is free, peaceful and tranquil, which is the poet’s mind. Chen Huijian praised the poem (iii) a

\(^{11}\) Sun Qi, op.cit.
a recluse poem which is very beautiful in nature and excellent in style. Cold Mountain appearing in poems (iv) and (v) with 'white clouds' thus implies the broadness of perception and space in his mind. Through all these incantatory writing loaded with luxuriant imagery, he reveals a fantastic imagination unrivaled by the poets who preceded him. Chen Huijian once again said:

"The 'Cold Mountain' written by Han Shan, has long been either his incarnation of visible or invisible. It is symbolic of Buddha nature. The depth of his poems is the embodiment of the enjoyable scenery.........."  

Other poems of Han Shan which were written about 'Cold Mountain' that conceal the poet's state of mind are as follows:

** (i) Long, long the way to Cold Mountain;

Stony, stony the banks of the chill stream.

(ii) People ask the way to Han-shan,

But there are no roads that get through.

* (iii) If you're looking for a place to rest,

Cold Mountain is good for a long stay.

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12 Chen Huijian, op.cit., pp.113-114.

13 Chen Huijian, Ibid., p.113
(iv) *Han-shan* is a place that is hidden away,
寒山栖隐处
Cut off from impure men passing by.
绝得人杂过

(v) Who there knows to leave the dust and the vulgar,
谁知出尘俗
And drive up the South face of *Han-shan*?
驭上寒山南

(vi) The way to *Han-shan*;
寒山道
Nobody arrives.
无人到

(vii) *Han-shan* is deep;
寒山深
It matches my mind.
称我心

(viii) *Han-shan* is cold;
寒山寒
Ice locks in the rocks.
冰锁石

In discussing Han Shan’s poems, one should not neglect one of his best loved works, commonly called by readers as “My mind”:

* My mind is like autumn moon
吾心似秋夜
shining clean and clear in the green pool.
碧潭清皎洁
No, that’s not a good comparison.
无物堪比伦
Tell me, how shall I explain?
教我如何说
There is nothing spectacular about this poem. It does not have an elaborate phrasing or a unique arrangement. The words used are plain and direct. But its charm lies in its elegant simplicity which grows on the reader. The poem is straightforward and simple as in the first line, "my mind is like autumn moon", still the image of moon is used. But this time the poet uses the 'autumn moon', thus providing the sense of distance and light. "Autumn moon" and "green pool" reflects the poet's clean and clear mind, which cannot really be compared to anything or be explained. The poet uses a simple analogy to express a simple truth.

Yuan Yu in his "Canglang Shihua" states that in order to reach state of poetry, direct language should be avoided. But this poem however uses very simple and direct language and at the same time is able to achieve beautiful state of poetry. Therefore it is not difficult to understand why this poem is regarded so highly.

Another poem, without the exception of the highly colloquial, reveals the same theme as the poem before:

I face toward the front valley,
look at myself in that emerald-green flow;
我向前溪照碧流

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14 Yuan Yu, "Shi Fa" (诗法), op.cit., p.4.
Or I look toward the side of the cliff,
sitting on rocks large and firm.
或向岩边坐盘石

My mind is like a lone cloud,
having nothing to use for support;
心似孤云无所依

Distant, distant the affairs of the world—
why must they be pursued?
悠悠世事何须觅

The theme simply expresses the free and clear mind. The atmosphere is natural and the poem is without affection. It gives the impression that it was composed with great spontaneity and without any effort. There is neither a majestic opening line nor a climatic closing line. Instead the sentiments are conveyed softly in narrative tone. Liu Dajie (刘大杰) in his “History of Development of Chinese Literature” (Zhongguo Wenzue Fazhanshi 中国文学发展史) states:

"Han Shan’s scope of poetry writing is broader and he is always able to add in the expression of a natural mood. His poems are not like Wang Fanzhi’s poems, which are dull and tasteless in manner."15

Let us consider some other poems which are the best in this kind:

* (i) The place where I spend my days.
  以我栖迟处
  is farther away than I can tell.
  幽深难可论
  Without a wind the wild vines stir;
  无风萝自动

No fog, yet the bamboos are always dark.
不雾竹长昏
Who do the valley streams sob for?
涧水缘谁因
Why do the mists huddle together?
山云忽自屯
At noon, sitting in my hut,
午时庵内坐
I realise for the first time that the sun has risen.
始觉日头转

* (ii) Men these days search for a way through the clouds,
时人寻云路
but the cloud way is dark and without sign.
云路杳无踪
The mountains are high and often steep and rocky;
山高多险峻
in the broadest valleys the sun seldom shines.
涧涧少玲珑
Green crests before you and behind,
碧嶂前兼后
white clouds to east and west-
白云西复东
do you want to know where the cloud way lies?
欲知云路处
There it is, in the midst of Nothing!
云路在虚空

* (iii) How cold it is on the mountain!
山中何太冷
Not just this year but always.
自古非今年
Crowded peaks forever choked with snow,
沓嶂恒凝雪
dark forests breathing endless mist:
幽林每吐烟
no grass sprouts till the early days of June;
草生芒种后
before the first of autumn, leaves are falling.
夜落立秋前
And here a wanderer, drowned in delusion,
此有沉迷客
looks and looks but cannot see the sky.
窥窥不见天

* (iv) I divined and chose a distant place to dwell-
仆择幽居地
T’ien - t’ai: what more is there to say?
天台更莫言
Monkeys cry where valley mists are cold;
猿啼溪雾冷
my grass gate blends with the colour of the crags.
岳色草门连
I pick leaves to thatch a hut among the pines,
折夜覆松室
scoop out a pond and lead a runnel from the spring
开池引涧泉
By now I’m used to doing without the world.
已甘万事休
Picking ferns, I pass the years that are left.
采蕨度残年

(v) I sit here on top of this large and firm rock;
磐陀石上坐
Streams in the valleys cold, icy and chilled.
溪涧冷凄凄
For my quiet amusement I prefer the exquisite and fine;
静玩偏嘉丽
Empty cliffs- wrapped in mist, dim and vague.
虚岩笼雾迷
Happy, contented- I rest in this place;
怡然憩歇处
With the sun’s last slanting rays tree shadows grow low.
日斜树影低
As for me, I look into the base of my mind,
我自观心地
And a lotus blossom emerges from the filthy mind.
莲花出淤泥

Han Shan is undeniably adept at writing poems on
nature. His poems on this thematic category are so natural and yet
crafty, colourful and clear, and their images are extremely lively. The
poet was able to acquire "the sound beyond the impression and the spirit beyond the idea." His poetry is skilled without elaboration and polished without over refinement. It has a deep and powerful spirit but remains natural. They can be said to be among the best descriptive Chinese poems on nature.