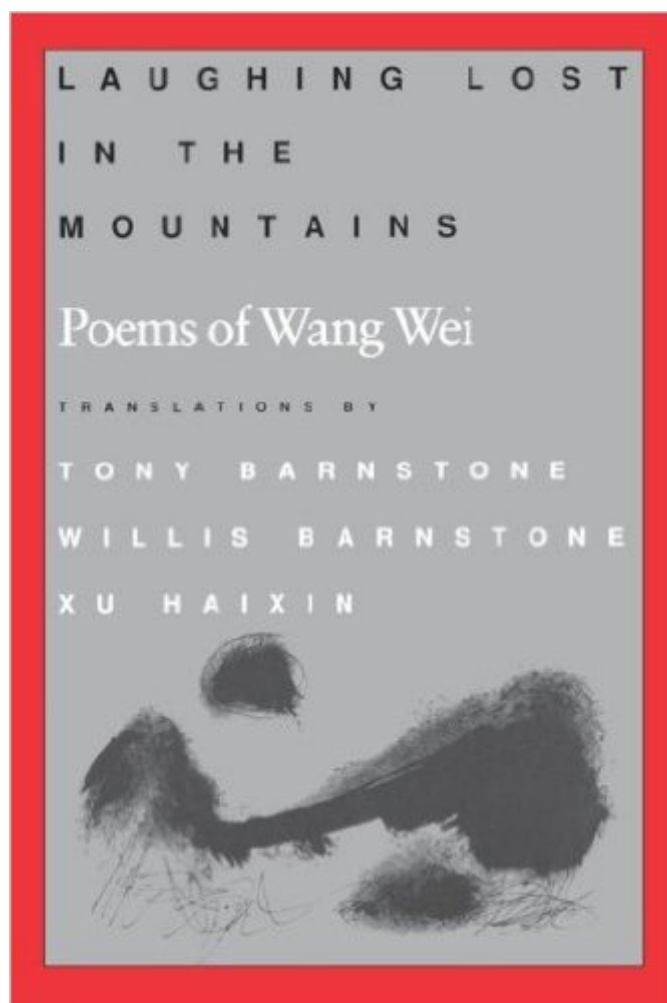


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Laughing Lost In The Mountains: Poems Of Wang Wei



Synopsis

Fine contemporary translations of one of the great poets of the T'ang dynasty.

Book Information

Paperback: 244 pages

Publisher: UPNE; Trans. from the Chinese edition (January 15, 1992)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0874515645

ISBN-13: 978-0874515640

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.6 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

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Customer Reviews

The Tang dynasty almost always gets pitched as the golden age of Chinese poetry. As much as I'm mildly skeptical of such sweeping characterizations for obscuring as much as they reveal, the poetry of Wang Wei included in "Laughing Lost in the Mountains" provides compelling evidence in favor of this particular generalization. Not that Wang's poetry is as dramatic or charismatic as his better-known peers Li Po or Du Fu. There is a different kind of talent at work here, one that is at once quietly meditative and down to earth, attracted to a hermit lifestyle in the countryside and yet unable to spurn the busy social life of the big city entirely, keenly aware of and yearning for the transcendent especially as it finds expression in the landscapes of nature but still humorously human, all too human. Wang Wei is too honest a poet ever to entirely resolve the tension one way or the other, a tension most of us can probably acutely relate to, and herein lies one key to the subdued power of his work. Then too, his uncanny ability to step back and let his richly observant descriptions of the natural world do his talking for him as an implied presence takes advantage of the syntax of Chinese poetry but to an ironically distinct and personally unique level. Certainly the pervasive influence of Buddhism and Daoism is at work here, and Wang makes no bones about that, but this same trait oddly and, well, somewhat accidentally gives his poems a modern edge. As translations go, the collective work by the father and son team of Willis and Tony Barnstone

together with Xu Haixin is superb.

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