

li bai xii-01

given to my younger brother, the chamberlain li tai qing as we parted when he went to jiang nan

far from the capital i wandered here and there  
then returned to autumn mountains of protracted dreams  
the chestnuts gained new color over the well of gold  
a single leaf floated to the white balustrade

i awaken and reach for the mirror bright  
and see my temple hairs have now become more white  
i have thrown my good intentions into the grass  
and must accept my withered mulberry look of age

i'll tell you what lies deep within my heart  
that people doubt my glistening drive of inner pearl  
long have i been a floating leaf on dong ting lake  
and now am at the swirling waters of the xiao and xiang

you my brother are an official yet able to help the world  
why should i be sorry that you have now been banned  
a burrowing white dragon will find its way in a barrel of water  
your essays from exile describe well the rise and fall of the empire

but i walked another, wilder path and met wang zi qiao  
who told me how to mix the elixir of extending life  
so i went to sit in the cave of mysteries, forgoing heaven and earth  
to leave and join as an immortal the court of the god yu huang

i wish to, comforting, pat you on the back  
and fondly wave my hand as i rise into the air

murphy a changed man after participating in the sun dance of the arapaho

7/13/2011 2:29 PM

li bai xii-02

drunkenness, dedicated to district judge wang from li yang

my brush with the hairs of countless rabbits is worn down  
my poems piled up to the weight of two oxen  
my brush races like a lion and a tiger have met  
my dancing sleeve touches the clouds in the firmament

the two tartar maidens sing their duets here for us  
their songs changing now to greet the morning sun  
i lift my cup and challenge the northern snow  
my eyes follow the flurries and give in to nothing

murphy partied out and about to collapse

7/14/2011 9:14 AM

li bai xii-03

dedicated to lower district judge xu of li yang. as he performed a children's dance before his mother  
i wrote this poem

in order to reach his mother of great age  
he served her in a most remarkable way  
first he danced as if he were a small child  
then he laid back on colorful robes as did lao lai zi

then he cried like a baby, then staggered around  
like a drunken man wending his way home by the light of the moon  
almost never does one see such a display of joy as hers  
shared happiness is truly rare in this world of ours

murphy wondering what it be like with alzheimer's

7/14/2011 9:27 AM

li bai xii-04

in the snow after drunkenness, dedicated to district judge wang from li yang

do not come close to a dragon shedding his scales  
do not try to braid with your hands the beard of a tiger  
you must have heard how once in the market of run an  
the immortal with white hair hid in his jade cup to hide his drunkenness

outside the window wang hui zhi hears the bamboo rustle in the wind  
and invites him in to share a cup of green wine  
the snowy landscape of shan yin is the same as that in li yang  
my eye is confused now, as before, by the flurries of white snow

there is wine in your home so why should i still be sad  
many guests full of joy wander around with torches in their hands  
they chatter away as xie shang might imitating the sparkle of the stars  
and drink wine as did si ma xiang ru without pawning their kingfisher jackets

yet tomorrow morning i will be in my boat on the river  
remembering for a thousand miles this tower in the moon light

7/14/2011 10:37 AM

li bai xii-05

given to governor you wen from xuan cheng, and at the same time to censor cui

who is as white as the feathers of the white heron  
who is as pure as the sound of the shrill cricket call  
he was born with a special nature  
one not influenced by the pressures of the world  
he drinks water like xu you in the ji mountains  
or eats snow like bo yi and shu ji on the summit of zhou yang  
he turns the carriage like mo di entering zhou go without being seen  
he speaks not like confucius when he passed the robber's nest  
guang cheng zi has such an elevated virtue  
lu zhong lian is also of such a character  
and outside of these two men there is no one  
no one who would care to assuage my angry heart  
once i held tightly to the flying dragons of the imperial equipage  
today i am a hundred times as soft as molten lead  
touched by the grace of the emperor i wished to repay him  
i gave up my official position and went to fight in northern yan  
i wrapped and tightened my arching bow with fresh tendons  
extended it was as the full moon and feared no enemy  
when i found the time i went off hunting on a splendid horse  
my hunt was successful and i downed two tigers with my arrows  
then turning quickly like a shooting star across the sky  
i shot two hawks from the air with my missiles  
the barbarians were amazed at my prowess  
and all this time i studied the arts of the five military branches  
i was surrounded by many brave officers  
and many of them lauded my growing expertise  
but there were also worthy soldiers who did not  
they lashed at me with their whips as once zu di did to liu kun  
but i sat tall and proud in my saddle showing free energy  
as the young man showed old ma yuan, everyone recognized my strength  
but ultimately i was unsuccessful and went back home  
i was worn down by the calumnifications heaped upon me  
without a strong wind it is difficult to furrow the waves  
so then i sat aimlessly on the banks of the great river  
perpetually under threats and miserable i lament the passing of time  
suddenly i realize three entire months are gone  
during this time i wandered over to jing ting mountain  
and listened in silence to the wind in the pines  
or i played with the moon's reflection in the wan xi river  
lying in an empty boat with the wind and the waves, upstream and down  
but then you a second yan yan zhi provided me a second tao yuan ming  
200,000 cash which was all quickly deposited in the wine taverns  
when i have the pleasurable opportunity to drink  
i will pursue the wine and gradually become a drunk immortal

beside this drink i encountered no other worries  
and thereby made real the chapters of the zhuang zi on the autumn waters  
because you , formerly one of the nine dignitaries, came here  
the land of waters has experienced many fruitful years  
fish and salt are abundant in teh central markets  
canvas and silk are as plentiful as clouds and fog  
since you came here you have shown no severity as governor  
the pitcher of ice sparkles as the surface of a clear river  
all the old men with their white eyebrows praise you  
they respect the wisdom you have shown as their governor  
you always consider respectfully the conditions of the people  
and you like your predecessor xie tiao take care of the eastern fields  
small children crowd around your coach riding their stick ponies  
welcoming the governor's carriage decorated with white deer  
smiling the children ask the emperor's representative  
whether he too returns home when the sun sets  
and only then do you return to the banquet on the banks of the lake  
where you have provided for the winds to be filled with beautiful music  
you personify the official who reaches high for the clouds  
where from the heights you tap on the shoulders of your predecessor xie tiao  
you are like a high tower from which one can gaze upon the far green sea  
you are a venerable old tree supporting a luxuriant growth of dark ivy  
you formally serve wine to this unworthy one who served you before  
it reminds of the wonderful food of the immortals, the liquid dawn  
i had the good intention of sweeping enemies from the desert sha mo  
and dreamed i was surrounded by banners and flags like a victorious general  
however my ongoing services are called upon less often these days  
and my yearning desire to be of use has had no chance of fulfillment  
and seeing an opportunity to put forth my request to the dragon gate  
sitting next to you at the fragrant feast, i seize the opportunity  
can i dare hope you will hand me the ceremonial whip of rao zhao  
i long to be together with you on a ship as was guo tai with li ying  
all this while you look down into the surrounding shallow waters  
your thoughts penetrating as deep as the ninth level of the heavens  
how proud and independent is your colleague cui  
he speaks wisely as he drinks wine with a thirst from the heart  
he himself is proud to belong to a famous family  
but his outstanding talents have heretofore been inhibited  
but now the phoenix sings from the crest of the wu tung tree  
and flexes his elegant wings in the refreshing breeze  
he knows very well that men such as i seek companionship  
we who knock our swords in dissatisfaction and dwell now in solitude

murphy putting forward an elegant slipper to announce his presence

8/30/2011 8:43 AM

li bai xii-06

given to zhao yue the governor of xuan cheng

the house of zhao recognized and conquered the prize jewel, the kingdom of zi  
this meritorious service to the realm is still in everyone's memory  
three thousand guests crowded round the hall as zhao sheng entered and left  
in the six kingdoms his fame grew until it still echoes to this day  
you have surpassed the merits of your distant ancestors  
with your military and civil service in the southern border provinces  
the zhao family is like a thousand foot high spruce  
with powerful dragons winding around its old roots  
no ordinary herbs grow under its branches protection  
for there are many fragrant orchids which appear there

i remember the time when i was first an official in nan yang  
since then you have embroidered the symbol of censor on your robes  
once you were a censor you went to yo du in the north pursuing insurgents  
entrusted with the ax you cleansed the north for the three armies  
then you assumed a lower rank for a time before you rose again in position  
burning incense in the censor's position you produced fragrant words of advice  
as once did kui and long you rose above the others in the eyes of the emperor  
your glory spread like thunder in lo yang as the emperor recognized your boldness  
then suddenly though sent to the provinces your ethics became more correct  
you went to three different districts to act as judge scattering evil doers

i, poor exile, was mistaken as the crane of duke yi of wei  
for i was indeed riding in the official carriage of the duke  
i laugh at myself for my torn shoes as once did dong gu ya  
and am ashamed i undeservedly received from you a warm white fox fur  
i sing idly to myself now as i walk between bamboo and rocks  
lost in the contemplation of nature i forget the morning and evening  
oppressed by my cares i am an ill-favored, even ugly man  
why should i dream of rising into the wind and the clouds of officialdom  
i am rather more like the monkey who rides on a cow in this world  
i'm like a skinny horse who plods between the single-trees of a carriage  
but i wish to borrow the sun from the driver of the sky-wagon  
the better to bring light on my difficult position  
if the north sea does not move how can the roc and giant kingfisher be found  
how can one demonstrate his worth and availability  
what i hope is that one day you will occupy an important position  
and i can rise without difficulty through your good offices

murphy kowtowing to the man in every way he knows how

9/4/2011 9:05 AM

li bai xi-07

given to my cousin li zhao, the zhang shi of xuan zhou

the country of huai nan looks out over the river to jiang an  
green mountains rise for a thousand miles on either side  
i have walked these mountains until exhausted  
so that half of them have gradually disappeared

you, li, are a prominent member of the imperial family  
and as such are strategically improving these waters and this land  
the great river is in its middle reaches here and at its widest  
it rushes on for a thousand miles to the lands of wu and gui

your heart can be likened to this great river of ours  
it encompasses the large and the small and takes the long view  
when you wield the brush you capture the sharpness of the wind and ice  
when you dispense justice you win the love of the people

in the hall of your court people see peach and plum blossoms  
before your lodgings carriages assemble and people with their parasols  
who would have thought that i on my meandering travels  
wandering like the clouds of cang wu should suddenly meet you

my talents do not equate to the teachings of the wise ones  
my fate is not in line with the tenor of the times  
i stand alone between the mountains and the sea  
simply growing older in the reign of an enlightened monarch

it is not easy to acquire as a friend men who appreciate me as you do  
with my hand on my sword i say this to you filled with emotion  
we need to promise each other to grow tall and proud  
and not to accept anything lesser as our goal

murphy always ready to embellish the stature of his clan

9/10/2011 8:21 AM



li bai xii-08

given to master chang, assistant district judge of nan ling, in the mountains of wu song

a cabbage isn't necessarily an orchid, a tree a spruce  
the orchid flowers in secret but sends its scent into the distance  
the spruce maintains its appearance throughout the cold of winter  
the spruce and the orchid exemplify strengths in their existence  
while skunk weed and cabbage grow rampant  
they perish when the cold weather comes

poultry feed cheerfully alongside other poultry  
the phoenix sits with a phoenix on the same branch  
when searching for pearls beads and sand are discarded  
only the rare true pearl is collected by discerning men

i who wander far from home find refuge with you, a famous noble  
and feel free now to express my sincere feelings to a like-minded man  
if i now hold back my heart, to whom shall i confide  
yu qing gave up his ministerial post to go walking with his friend wei qi  
the 500 friends who accompanied dian heng by the sea  
all died on the same day when news of his death reached them  
if yu qing and dian heng did not have such worthy love  
would we still remember them with such affection today

i want you and i, my friend, to share such love  
i am in great embarrassment now that i leave your house  
i know not where i should travel, thinking only of return  
though this travelers long sword yearns for home and the autumn wind

murphy always the impeccable guest

9/12/2011 8:48 AM

li bai xii-09

as i reached jing ting mountain in liang yuan, i met the priest hui gong and discussed with him the beauty of the surrounding landscape. expressing the hope of wandering there with him, i offered this poem

i have come to the mountains with the autumn winds  
as i fear the wonderful herbs will soon perish from the cold  
on my way here there were few celebrated mountains  
where i could have dallied with the clouds and the moon

i crossed over the river as i had done before  
where yellowed leaves were blown against my face  
i have always loved jing ting mountain  
and took time to gaze on the purity of the flowing waters

the valleys shone with a beautiful icy rime of morning  
and the mountains include the city on the river xuan zhou  
from there came the brilliance of wu and shi  
those senior officials who are now a credit to the capital chang an

the land of the waters an hui is rich in extraordinary men  
but there are many who hide their skills in the wilderness  
you, hui gong, are really quite a famous priest  
wherever you live you are valued as a precious jewel

when you open your hall to teach, swinging your fly whisk  
your lofty discussions bring the dark clouds above to a halt  
you have snow capped mountains painted on your whitewashed walls  
and many men of letters have praised you in their poems

you describe for me the pleasures of the lonely life  
and extol the beauty of ling yang mountain in an hui

*“over the pond the white dragon stretches to the sky  
the moon shines in the clear waters of autumn  
the stone massif beyond is the yellow mountain  
who might it have been to raise it up so high  
the yellow crane no longer comes here to visit  
as zhi an has passed over into the great beyond  
to the southeast the mountains rise to such heights  
that even the mountain birds cannot fly over  
densely piled mountain upon mountain  
peaks that disappear into the ethereal clouds”*

as i listen to your words i wish to take up my walking stick  
yet now i return to my cell and sit behind a locked door

i feel desire for the landscape of ling yang  
there to sit under the bright moon one can see but not touch  
can you find time now to set your white feet in motion  
to join with me in this blue mountain region

let me know with an affirmative letter  
then my anxious face will show its joy

murphy always game for a new adventure

9/14/2011 8:57 AM

li bai xii-10

three poems given to a friend (1 of 3)

an orchid does not grow beside your door  
she is different from the common stretch of grass  
and now the orchid is impaired by dew and frost  
herred flowers have faded from their glory

for without permission she has sent out her stalks  
and taken root by the pond of the prince  
but her time of fragrant beauty has now passed  
yet she has learned the free grace of the blowing winds

now if you wish to take the favor of her perfume with you  
her memory will pursue you the whole year through

murphy taking his madeleines where he finds them

9/14/2011 10:58 AM

li bai xii-11

three poems given to a friend (2 of 3)

jing ko carried hidden in his sleeve the sharp dagger of zhao  
which the crown prince from yan had acquired from xu fu ren  
with his breast bedecked with jewels sparkling like snow and ice  
he proceeded on his mission from yan to travel again to qin

his attack was ultimately to be unsuccessful  
and the dagger itself was lost in the sands and dust of time  
now i would attempt the same and help you in your difficulties  
for after jing ko was removed other hard men attempted the same

long i stood on the banks of the yi in sympathy with the roiling waves  
to dig a well go down to the water, spread a sail to cross the river  
an honest man thinks only of justice and victory, a keen horse needs no whip  
in life one must appreciate friendship, gold and money pale in comparison

murphy an exemplary right hand man

9/15/2011 8:18 AM

li bai xii-12

three poems given to a friend (3 of 3)

si ma xiang ru mocked many of the activities of the world  
and professed to do little, yet his chest was filled with ideas  
he continually mocked the heroes of ancient times  
and regarded their actions to be like games of children

i also thought in my life to emulate a broad approach to the dao  
i thought this could allow me to help the ruler with far reaching plans  
but in the cold north of the mountains i suffered much  
and who would have thought you would offer me your house south of the road

it was the time of the new year with the smell of wine on the wind  
frost covered the temples which were well known by both sides  
the ruler of shu hoped for a man such as zhu ge liang  
the house of jin wished for such as xie an, but no one wished me

when their time came they were each given high posts  
they were clearly expecting the reward of a lucky throw  
yet like a crouching tiger i escaped the swirling rage of the tartars  
like a fisherman singing his songs i traveled over the sea

because of my tattered furs i was ashamed before your wife and sister  
yet still in all i made my long sword available with all my worth  
you, oh master, hold high the tradition of a well maintained household  
it is difficult to imagine one more attuned to one's duty to friends

i do not promise water as zhuang zi did the fish in the wheel rut  
i cannot bring you the waters of the western stream  
but if i should later win a high position, i will remember you well  
i will bring you yellow gold as reward for your kindness now

murphy profligate with the promise of future riches

9/15/2011 8:46 AM

li bai xii-13

a statement of my feelings, offered to a friend

ji zha had a precious sword worth more than a thousand pieces of gold  
he was sent as ambassador to the west by his old friend prince xu  
who had made known his admiration of the coveted sword  
when zha returned from jin the prince was dead  
in tribute to his friend he hung the sword on the cypress by the grave  
everyone recognized this generosity as remaining loyal to one's friends

even the weak were taken by this act emulating stronger men  
bao shu ya spoke up for guan zhong as a statesman  
and he was ultimately made special minister of collections in qi  
had he not had such a good friend how would he have attained the posting  
against all temptations of ill gained wealth bao shu ya accepted small compensation  
subsequent generations have praised him yet few have attained his high virtue  
but when one can speak of such with friends who can say it no longer is possible

i esteem your literary work which outshines all contemporaries  
your output has brought new life into a declining art  
when i came to stay here i found you were a neighbor by the stream  
my bright guitar sang of clouds and moon, good wine brightened winter and spring  
but my small ability is now ignored and i am left behind as though i were dust  
since ancient times many who are bold have difficulties and are ignored  
even if others withdraw from me, you should remain loyal  
how has it come to be, this growing distance between us  
a whirlwind has blown up bad vapors, you close your eyes and i am not seen  
i open these pearls in my heart to you but suspect i will be rejected  
i think of picking fragrant orchids to send to your hide-away  
yet deep sorrow has benumbed my heart and insults to me bring tears  
i want nothing more than to see once more the warm light beckon over the eastern wall

murphy destitute enough to resort to groveling

10/3/2011 9:08 AM

li bai xii-14

given to my cousin li lie

i once set a high price on a mountain pheasant, not knowing the true phoenix  
i wanted it to offer to my prince and only later recognized my error  
now i live north of qi yuan cheng and am long separated from the west of xian yang  
though the wind is blowing the long winter is over, and the oriole now sings

peach and plum trees have begun their blooms but the cold still threatens their loneliness  
since i met you; and the flowers of brotherhood have blossomed; we have shared joy  
this is the time of green mulberry leaves and the growth of the silk caterpillars  
when the sun rises the cuckoo calls and the peasants shoulder their hoes

i am the only one with sorrow here and no one invites me to go into the fields  
fu yue called down rain to help his people, gong shu zi built high tower ladders  
the battles with the western barbarians still rage, and nobility wrestles in the mud  
i have extensive plans to aid the state and would humbly accept an official position

but i have not the chance of an audience so will stay here leaning on my walking stick  
if in later years you wish to see me, check out the rock by the spring where pan xi once fished

murphy dreaming once again of retiring into the hills

10/4/2011 8:33 AM



li bai xii-15

lu qiu, living in seclusion

your simple country home is in the hamlet of sha tang in an hui  
shadows of bamboo sweep the moonlit land, lotus blossoms float in the pond  
your leisure reading is the shan hai jing, its cover left behind in the reading room  
my desire now is for such pleasures of country life, and i wish to stay in these woods

you offer perfumed wine for the festival, you cook me dewy mallows from your garden  
if you wish a student to plant peaches and plums, help me cut the reeds for a hut

murphy recognizing a rare sensei to learn from

10/4/2011 8:47 AM

li bai xii-16

dedicated to qian shao yang, a scholar appointed by the emperor

we each have a white jade cup filled with wine  
and sit together in the green pastures of the third month  
the spring winds will last only a short time  
our hair has long since turned to silver threads

throughout the night we consume the light of the candles  
it is never too late to cast the fishing lines  
for if one should meet princes hunting on the banks of the wei river  
one can always be the teacher as tai gong once was at wa wang

murphy imagining a life in the ivory tower

10/4/2011 9:04 AM

li bai xii-17

given to the reverend zhong zhun, the buddhist priest of ling yuan monastery in xuan zhou

the white clouds over the jing ting mountains  
are as beautiful as those of cang wu  
their scudding shadows dark on the waters  
as if the sky had fallen on mirror lake

there are many men of the power of dragons and elephants  
and then there is reverend zhong zhun  
the nobility of his reputation is everywhere in jiang dong  
and spreads even to the distant sea

your heart glows as moonlight on the water  
you have acquired the sacred pearl of buddha  
today i met you and you are a second zhi dun  
the one who taught me the character of both life and death

murphy still with the grain of religiosity deep within him

10/5/2011 8:26 AM

li bai xii-18

given to the buddhist priest zhao mei

once as sailors floated over the high waves  
a long whale rose from the great ocean  
he sucked in huge masses of water  
as the ship disappeared into his mighty throat

among the people on this ship only one survived  
and he has found buddha's pearl of moon radiance  
its value surpasses all else on earth  
its rich luster illuminating all the lakes and seas

the man holds the pearl on a gold thread of his shirt  
and yet seems indifferent that it is there  
who among us truly understands this little gem  
i for one respect it highly and laugh to myself

our two hearts have understood the lesson  
why should we talk about what only the buddha can bestow

murphy the zen clown with arms akimbo

10/5/2011 8:42 AM

li bai xii-19

given to the buddhist priest xing rong

in the liang dynasty the priest tang hui xiu often walked with the poet bao zhao  
the priest shi huai yi of e mei shan sat at home with the learned chen zi ang  
these two eminent buddhist priests made friends with a phoenix and a unicorn  
xing rong is also as famous as these men and i have been honored to know him

he is like the spirit hai ro who does not hide his worth and shares his pearl with others  
when one decides to go out to sea in a light boat he trusts to fate and quiet waves  
when one writes poems in the sandal wood tower he sips the wine of parrot island  
wait until i come to east yue, we will walk hand in hand to visit the bai lou pavilion

murphy accepting his identity as a poet

10/6/2011 8:26 AM

li bai xii-20

given to reverend hu from huang shan with a request for his two white cranes

*introduction: i have heard that hu of huang shan has a pair of white cranes, which were hatched by domestic fowl and from youth were tame and familiar. they show absolutely no fear or suspicion. he calls them by their names, and they eat from his hand. these birds are usually particularly shy, and it is very difficult to tame them. i have all my life, a very great fondness for these birds and so far but i have been unable to obtain such. hu wants to separate himself from them and give them to me, but he asks for a poem in return. when i heard this, i was glad, for an old wish was to come true, and i took the brush, three times crying out with joy, and gave him this poem, without taking any time on an effort to improve it.*

with two white gems i wish to buy your two white cranes  
their whiteness is that of brilliant brocade and shames even the snow  
they cast their shadow on the clear jade pond as they preen their feathers  
they are quiet in the moonlight and walk through the fallen flowers of morning

i want to have these birds and sit with them in play on the green mountains  
if hu can bear to part with them, he might send them to me with the man who bears this poem

murphy not looking a gift horse in the mouth

10/6/2011 8:43 AM

li bai xii-21

i climb jing ting mountain, look south and think of the ancient world: given to secretary dou

as soon as i reach the top i turn to look south, my eye slowly reaches the far horizon  
five or six immortals, i am told, are wont to have walked these same paths  
the creek below is the haunt of qin gao, the towering cliffs the altar of fee ma gu  
the white dragon of zi ming comes here as does the yellow crane of huang zi an

these geniuses reached the sun and the moon on the wings of the phoenix  
as i descend from the heights i remember the unrest of the land of the four seas  
i wish to renounce this world i see before me and to follow these wise men  
my life is already half spent and what lies before is vague and blurred

i have to force myself to eat in the morning as i rise with a long sigh  
i must follow the way of dou zi ming and prepare the elixir of life in the purifying fire

murphy disgusted with the mendacity he sees around him

10/7/2011 8:58 AM

li bai xii-22

after the riots, as i am about to escape yan zhong, i leave i give this poem to district judge cui of  
xuan cheng

the two wild geese of the huns flew out from lo yang  
the five horses of home crossed over the stream  
who would have imagined the young hun shi le  
would move to the eastern gate and give his whistle

panthers and tigers roam the central lands  
a terrible fire destroyed the temple of the dynasty  
venus inauspiciously disturbs the sky during the day  
the sun is setting and we lose its healing warmth

houses in all the cities are being ransacked  
the path of the people a flight over stony ground  
the whole world looks with trepidation toward chang-an  
no longer smiling eyebrows when talking of the capital

people are coming to me like autumn leaves  
they wish to mourn over the bleached bones of the fallen  
the weapons of the many troops gleam like snowy mountains  
but who can guarantee they will defeat the enemy

i spread my wings like the roc who hovers over the northern sea  
i imitate the panther who crouches, hidden in the southern mountains  
master cui has always been for me the most worthy of hosts  
he often calls for me when he wishes to have a talk

on the bench lies the flute studded with violet gems  
i lean back to make music whose tones penetrate the clouds  
xuan zhou is filled with the willow flowers of spring  
my host has put out his wine and we look out over the land

suddenly i think of traveling out past the yan river  
and remember the beautiful water and rocks of that region  
there the snow makes heaven and earth sparkle through the day  
clean air brings crystal clear views of the lakes and mountains

filled with sorrow i sing a sad song as a man from lo yang  
i take my drunken leave after heartfelt songs of wu and yue  
red clouds above tremble with late evening gold trim  
the setting sun highlights the rocks of the sea

i sit in solitude with thoughts of the past  
and let my fishing rod hang idly over the stream  
a monkey nearby complains to the heavens



a man makes waves on the moonlit surface with his oar

i wish for you to become free of your work as a district judge  
and come with me to find the secret of the elixir of life  
if you bend down forever with your hair turning grey  
you will earn the ridicule of tao yuan ming

murphy chucking it all in and heading for the hills

10/9/2011 8:15 AM

li bai xii-23

given to my uncle yang li bing, prefect of dang tu

qin shi huang darkened the six kingdoms  
wang mang brought his new dynasty to a state of confusion  
how could one know that a gao zi or guang wu di would rise  
but, of course, they had men who helped them  
xiao he and cao can put an end to the unsafe condition of the kingdom  
king yan and xiao fu broke the resistance of the rebels  
in my family is a man who is comparable to these good men  
the powerful rise among the great of our dynasty  
although you wear not the insignia of the three highest dignitaries of the empire  
and you have not won your place among the revered four heroes of the land  
you have known how to harness the power of the wind and the clouds  
and have stood at last to serve the emperor with the essence of dragons and tigers  
when still a young man you came to yan and zhao  
and many worthy men gathered around your banner  
you were a master of elevated conversation  
and zhi bu made you one of the most important voices for change

i know how you tend to forget your friends in different offices  
and i have always feared we would never get to meet  
my respectful thoughts have crystallized into nightly dreams  
my heart full of the longing to be with you, the distant one  
i am shamed compared to your high achievements  
yet have now emptied the jeweled wine cup with you  
500 years ago saw the friends of the bamboo grove come together  
and now hopefully the bamboo is turning green again  
wonderful songs emanate from the trees of the grove  
and our laughter roars forth as sudden thunder  
you take the brush and write using the seal script  
it looks like rippling clouds and strikes fear in the heart  
your rhetoric has an unusually brilliant originality  
you instinctively rank the stars in the colors they show  
your beautiful verses pour forth into the kingdom of the great river  
and your great talent is well known in the imperial palace

in these difficult times you became the prefect of an old city  
which was actually not thought of much anymore  
the people disappeared like torn grass in the wind  
when sweeping the floor there was nothing to glean  
but your grace extended even to the birds and beasts  
now the people have all returned to farming once again  
the broad han river rolls wide its 10,000 miles  
just as far spreads the reputation you have gained  
hymns of praise are heard throughout the lands of wu and yue  
they reach to the heights of the constellation of the three dignitaries

when i left nan ging i set out from the bai xia ting pavilion  
high officials looked on this migratory bird with pity  
spreading its wings differently from all the others  
everyone draws as a gift a five colored feather from their own plumage  
their good intentions are easy to compare with tai shan mountain  
what they gave me, however, was only the cost of departure  
it was like when a man carries a bucket of water to wet a whale  
beating time with my sword here in dang tu i sing a song of action  
because a cold wind rises between the front pillars of the house  
the moon falls in the morning behind tian shan men  
a pure frost whitens the niu xu mountain  
with a deep sigh i make my way back to the river bank  
i stand there ready to consider the embarrassment of my predicament

murphy running from his troubles only so far and no further

10/11/2011 11:55 AM

li bai xii-24

description of my feelings, given to the honorable chang under-district-judge of nan ling

during the years when the annual star disappeared from the heavens  
there appeared dong fang so for the first time before his illustrious ruler  
he ridiculed the people of his time and soon gave up the imperial pleasure

i, after i left the unicorn gallery, became alienated from the palace as did he  
old friends no longer visited and autumn herbs grew lush on my front stairs  
how different it was when you arrived and showed my poor heart sympathy  
you organized a party on the ling xiao terrace whose discussions still rage  
our songs set bai zhu shan in motion, our dances the moon over the tian men mountains

you asked me what oppressed my heart, so i step in front of you to tell what i want  
you understand my talents and skills, however small when compared to confucius in lu  
as the great saint had no success in life, why should i be one to complain  
in the fifth month in yunnan the army suffered repeated defeats at the lu river  
toxic herbs killed the horses of the han and the rebels snatched the flag from qin  
even now the xi er he runs with blood and is filled with dead bodies  
the generals have no strategy as that of zhu ge liang to quell the unrest  
and even though chang an is most important the people there have not enough to eat  
several bushels of precious stones are worth less than a bowl of rice  
fortunately an able minister was found who could reassure the masses  
i realized that i could not help and have so far not returned  
grief has whitened the hairs of well meaning men, tears flooding their clothes  
because of the unrest i myself roamed and unfortunately have alienated the world  
finally i will like confucius confront those who offer only slander  
but i will not allow myself to be the cause for mocking the people of lu

murphy explaining his peculiar activities in their best light

10/12/2011 9:05 AM