

ii-1

great classical odes have not been written for ages
i am already old so others should approach the throne
for centuries our rulers allowed this art to decay
in the period of the warring empires we produced only brier patches

like dragons and tigers, men consumed themselves fighting
these times continued until the wild emperor qin shi-huang
poetry was blurred, insignificant, and inferior to the book of odes
lamentations arose from the times of qu yuan

yang xiong and si-ma xiang-ru chased ebbing waves
opened themselves to being swamped in vast waters
though bloom and decay have come in myriad forms
the higher essence of poetry has vanished

it has been such since the jian-an period
we had nothing left but worthless mannerisms
yet our great tang has seen a renaissance of antiquity
our temperate government welcomes clarity and truth

many talented voices have become active
their development is fostered by the times
they now compete in radiant form and content
they sparkle side by side as the stars in autumn skies

my intention is to concentrate on short verses
to ruminate on the glory of the past millennia
in the manner of confucius from beginning to end
and will quit my brush only to seek the unicorn

murphy in a vain attempt to emulate shakespeare and his sonnets

ii-2

the three legged toad consumed the sky
and ate the jasper balcony, the moon shrank
became smaller and smaller in the heavens
finally but a silver wisp of soul, it vanished

a rainbow appeared in the constellation zi-wei
the shine of morning was hidden
the spreading cloud severed sun and moon
all nature draped itself in darkness

former empress chen sent alone to chang-men palace
matters that were once were now no more
cinnamon tree eaten by worms, the blooms brought no fruit
the imperial displeasure palpable and severe

deep in grief she went into the eternal night
this story causes me to wipe tears on my sleeves

murphy accepting with stoicism his diminished lot in life

ii-3

emperor qin shi-huang sped through the six directions of space
his attitude that of the tiger filled with wild courage
he brandished his sword, separated the passing clouds
summoned all the enfeifed princes to chang-an

the mandate of heaven made manifest in his clear decisions
his mighty presence increased the power of his many talents
he collected the weapons to make memorial statues
he opened the han-gu-guan pass to the east

he inscribed the stele on mount gui-ji with his triumphs
he made haste to finish the lang-ya terrace
he used 700,000 prisoners to build his public works
he built his burial chambers in a cavern of li shan mountain

all the while he continued his search for the elixir of immortality
which causes one's heart to reach out to him with pity
with his repeating crossbow he hunted the great fish of the sea
indeed the massive whale of imposing dimensions

he shot five times into his spout as if into a mountain
the waves lashed high as the dark clouds thundered
obscuring the fins and the deep blue sky
why then did he turned his gaze to the mystical island of peng-lai

xu shi brought the young women of qin there
when will we see his houseboat once more
probably only at the confluence of the three streams
where the bronze coffin of the emperor lies in cold ashes

murphy accepting his fate of being non-descript

ii-4

the phoenix flies nine thousand fathoms high
all the artist's skills reflected in his feathers
he brings a written message in his beak
then flies free into the ether from zhou to qin

he crosses over the bottomless four seas
and returns to his nest known by no neighbors
my heart's desire is to ride the purple fumes
and shake the dust of the earth for a thousand years

magic ingredients are hidden in the seas and the mountains
i collect the lead on the banks of the qing-xi stream
and often visit da-lu-shan mountain in my search
lifting my head and looking for immortals

who fly by riding the phoenix, forever trying to lose their shadows
or in a chariot of clouds seeking their rebirth of escape
but i fear that the elixir of life comes too late
for me to be able to satisfy my desires

for in the mirror i see snow white hair
i would be ashamed to be seen as a crane-riding immortal
the peach and plum blossoms are everywhere now
but they are not those of my springtime

but they correspond to the regions of celestial residence
and reflect forever the genius of the daoist immortals

murphy still waiting for his supply of psilocybin

ii-5

how magnificent the blue green tai-bo-shan mountain
how thickly stars array themselves above its heights
thereon lives an old man with black hair
between the clouds sleeping on snow under the pines

full 300 miles away, up in heaven's dome
isolated from the lower world of people
alone, he does not laugh nor does he speak
he lives in the darkness of his rock cave

when i came to visit this sacred immortal
i knelt before him and asked for his precious secret
he laughed aloud flashing his perfect teeth
and taught me how to prepare the medicine

his words stabbed deep into my bones
he straightened his body and then was gone
i looked around and he was nowhere to be seen
suddenly the five emotions flushed hot in my body

now i wish to obtain the philosopher's stone
and forevermore leave the vale of mere mortals

murphy old, bemused, and still practicing to become the best

ii-6

the horse from dai-zhou thinks not of yue
the bird of yue has no desire for yan
feelings are controlled by habit
and these are fixed by the customs of the country

i have left yan-men pass behind
and now stand as a warrior against lung-ting
sandstorms obscure the sun's rise from the sea
snowstorms conceal the sky of asia to the west

lice nest in the tiger-skin cap of my uniform
my heart is as unsettled as the flags in the wind
caught in a bitter intractable struggle
loyalty can be difficult to express

though li-guang the flying general of the border
had no regrets concerning his destiny

murphy the reluctant recruit standing at parade rest

ii-7

among the wanderers is an immortal riding a crane
there he flies through the wide heavens
exulting as he penetrates the dark clouds
he calls himself an qi-sheng

two boys with alabaster faces
play the flute of the purple phoenix
their shadows suddenly vanish
a cyclone sings burly music of the sky

i am able to see into the distance
they go whirling away like shooting stars
i must now eat some golden herbs
then i will be as wise and old as the sky

murphy eagerly contemplating his next toke

in chang-an in the time of early spring
the branches of the willows turn golden yellow
but who is that young man in the green cap
it is the beloved brother of the coral merchant

every evening he returns home drunk with wine
though his white horse prances proudly by
his appearance causes people to look up
as he saunters past their respectful gaze

yang-xiong knows nothing of workings of the state
he has described the chang-an palace
as well built but its façade grows old
he likens it to the author of tai-xuan-jing with his silk-white temples

sadly, this elder threw himself down from the tower
only because of the silly scorn of such simpletons

murphy taking criticism too much to heart

ii-9

zhuang-zi dreamed he was a butterfly
waking, the butterfly became zhuang-zi
a being becomes ever new in its transformations
all of nature is a constant vortex of change

the magic waters around the fabled isle of peng-lai
were once the shallows of a transparent stream
the man planting melons beside the blue gates of chang-an
was once the be-robed marquis of dong-ling

rank and riches all vanish into dust
why then all this hustle and bustle

murphy sitting by the river waiting for the perch to bite

ii-10

in the kingdom of qi were many wild men
lu zhong-lian was one such to to remember
a moonlight pearl comes from the depths of the ocean
and one morning displays her singular glory

han-dan achieved fame effecting the retreat of the qin dynasty
men of later days honor the radiance of his glory
in his opinion a gift of a thousand pieces of gold was worthless
and he laughed at this offer of ping yuan-qun

i am the same sort of wild impetuous fellow
flouncing my clothes and singing the same song

murphy obdurate in his oddity

ii-11

the huang-he rushes east to the ocean
the burning sun sinks into the western lands
the moving water, the fleeting rays
wait not an eye-blink for one another

the beauty of youth has forsaken me
the autumn of life has bleached my hair
man's nature is not that of the cold pine tree
which keeps its green for all its many years

i must need ride a dragon into the clouds
to bring the light of heaven to a grinding halt

murphy changing costumes in a phone booth

ii-12

trunks of pines and cypress stand straight and alone
remarkably unlike either the peach or the plum
once there was a famous man yan guang
who decided to go fish in the cang river

his body disappeared like a comet
his heart was as contented as a cloud
deeply he bowed to the emperor
then returned to the fu-chun mountains

a cold wind blows through the six directions of space
it is too far for me to reach out to him
this causes me to heave a deep sigh
and remain here living in the darkness between rocks

murphy checking up on his contemporaries at his fiftieth reunion

ii-13

yan zhun-wing once eschewed the world
and the world eschewed yan zhun-wing
observing change he perceived the beginning of becoming
studying the mysteries he understood all living things

he entered silence to continue contemplation of the tao
keeping his secret thoughts behind a drawn curtain
morality in being is not a groundless enterprise
the song of the phoenix being only seldom heard

as the shepherd boy enhances the path of the milky way
so does yan supplement the splendor of sun's glory

murphy a fool for sitting zazen

ii-14

the passes to central asia are thick with sandstorms
all men have reported their bitter icy winds
flowers do not bloom, the leaves and grass turn yellow
i climb a small hillock to look out at the enemy's hordes

abandoned towns speckle the coarse sand sea
not a wall still stands whole before my searching eyes
fields of old white bones are strewn before me
their piles poke through thick underbrush

who is responsible for this gruesome destruction
the proud sons of central asia who defied authority
they brought our emperor to a monumental rage
he ordered the drums to stir the wrath of his troops

harmony among men became murderous war
all of china was made to conscript men
in total 360,000 were sent to meet the enemy
lamentations rose and tears fell like rain

overall the complaint was why do i have to go
why can i not farm my land, make a garden
were these drafted men not to be noticed when they left
did not the people understand the rigors of the passes

no longer do we have a leader equal to li mu
the people have become victims of wolves and tigers

murphy imagining walking the khyber pass with full field pack

ii-15

king zhao of yan summoned guo-wei
and built for him the golden terrace
then came ji-xin from the zhao kingdom
and then zou-yan from the land of qi

how could this not be with such scholars
i, however, was treated like dirt by my prince
this one treats singers and courtesans to riches
and buys only grain for wise men to eat

now i understand why the yellow crane rises
and flies about, alone, for a thousand miles

murphy choosing a life of poverty as a mere math teacher

ii-16

both precious swords flashed the power of dragons
outclassing the white of marsh mallows as does the snow
their reflected rays flashed from earth to heaven
even the blaze of lightning was put to shame

after they were taken from their golden chest, separated
one hidden on mount qu, the other dropped in the river wu
feng hu-zi had died long before that time
and the blades were no longer known by men

the wu river is ten thousand fathoms deep
qu mountain is a full ten miles high
the male and female swords were never before separated
great wondrous things are most often found in pairs

murphy honing his new pocket knife in case he loses his old

ii-17

the shepherd of jin hua-shan mountain
is one the immortals within the purple mists
i would like to wander in his company
too bad my hair is already white before i can begin

i do not understand why when i was young
i could not free myself from worldly concerns
and seek the tree of immortality on kun-lun mountain
whose blooms can cleanse the soul of the slag of mortality

murphy accepting the allness of the tribe of living things

in the third month on the bridge of the heaven's ford
one sees thousands of peach trees and gardens blooming
in the morning they stir the heart with their beauty
in the evening they reflect on the moving waters

the water from earlier is the same as from later
it flows as always in an unstoppable stream
the new men, however, are not the old
that year end year out cross this bridge

when roosters crow the sun rises from the sea
then gather the highest dignitaries of the land
the moon sinks west of the shang-yang palace
the night lamp still barely seen beside the great gate

uniforms of the officials gleam like sun on the clouds
after the audience they disperse into the imperial city
their horses seem to be flying dragons
flashing fancy equipage embellished with gold

the crossing people scatter throughout the city
their bustling energy challenges even song-shan mountain
reaching their homes they pass into their great halls
where delicacies await in the ceremonial vessels

a fragrant wind ushers in dancers from zhao
a beautiful flutes accompany singers from qi
seventy violet mandarin ducks
dance in pairs in the darkened forecourt

amusements continue through the days and the nights
one could say it has gone on for a thousand years
taking one's salary and then retiring to splendor
it has always been a common mistake

li-si sighed in vain over his brown hounds
the concubine lu-zhu caused shi-chong's downfall
why then does one not emulate fan-li
and row around in a flat boat without an official's cap

murphy carefree with his feet up on his desk

ii-19

in the west is lotus bloom mountain
in the distant firmament one sees the morning star
with a white hand she picks the lotus flower
as she floats free through the heavens

her rainbow clothes have a long sash
which touches me as i rise up to the heavens
she invites me to climb to the terrace of the clouds
i bow deeply before the immortal wei shuqing

suddenly it is as if i were riding with him
on a stork in the purple haze gazing down
i look at the waters around lo-yang
and at the blur of marching soldiers from foreign lands

at the shed blood color of the land, the green of the plants
and know there are only wolves in the pack of officials

murphy gaining perspective in his imagination

a.

once i wandered to the capital city of qi
and climbed the flower stalk mountain nearby
how stately and proud this mountain stood
its deep green the color of marsh mallow leaves

then an old immortal came to me in a rush
i recognized him as chi-song-zi
he loaned me a white deer
he himself rode atop two blue dragons

with a smile he flew out over the world below
gladly would i have flown beside him

b.

i wept as i parted from my family and friends
i wanted to talk but could only bring forth tears
oh friend, heed the example of the darksome pine
summoning old ways they survive the biting snow

the world is filled with hardship and danger
sunshine is but a a sham of benevolence
after we separate each of us goes a thousand miles
when will we ever return from such distance

c.

how much longer are we in this world
in an eye-blink a whirlwind descends
i have learned nothing from the books of secrecy
my hair now white, i regret my trials

when i consider myself i scoff from within
with sinking thoughts i see no reason for effort
fame and profit have done nothing but beguile
can i not find a haven of peaceful repose

and like an-qi-sheng put on my ruby red slippers
and take the road east to the isle of peng-lai
but as i seek the way there as did the ruler of qin
i see only clouds and fog over the blue waves of the deep

murphy trapped as we all are in the cells of his mind

ii-21

the vagabond from ying sang to the snow
the melody echoed up into the heavens
his music was composed and sung in vain
for who was there to hear and pass it on

he tried to sing it to the people of si-chuan
but they sang along only with simpler songs
he held back his tears, who would understand
he regretfully sighed his deep disappointment

murphy keeping his scribblings in a secret database

ii-22

the waters of shen-si pour from the long-shou-shan mountains
within their roar one discerns the wails of many voices
when the horses of the huns see the snows of the north
they continually whinny their joy as they prance along

the fullness of nature burrows deep in my heart
in this far land i cannot control my yearnings for home

once i saw the butterflies flitting in autumn
now i sit and watch the silkworms grow in the spring
gorging themselves on fresh new mulberry leaves
now in the time of the willows' bright greening

the seasons flash by with the cataract's speed
my heart restlessly flutters like a flag in high winds
i wipe away my tears but they only return
when will my sorrows finally be soothed

murphy peering into the darkness of his eternal cave

ii-23

the frost this autumn is a delicate white jade
it beads on the vegetation in the forecourt
its appearance suddenly noticed as i go walking by
i stop to complain about cold and the changing season

the life of a man flits by like a swallow in flight
why should he encumber himself with emotional ties
how foolishly duke jing obsessed over his death
shedding his tears on niu-shan mountain

sadly the world seldom lends contentment
as soon as gan-su is conquered one looks at si-chuan
the human heart is filled with choppy waves
the paths in the world are always curved

in all the unfolding years of our lives
one must burn the candle each and every night

murphy bright and chipper after a good night's sleep

ii-24

the great coach whirled up so much dust
the light of noon was suddenly extinguished
the minions of the eunuchs have much gold
their houses rise high up toward the clouds

on my way i meet a game cock breeder
how grand and imposing his cap and his parasol
his nose held so high his breath a rainbow to heaven
the passersby all react with apprehension

the current world knows not who washes his ears
who can distinguish between emperor yao and the bandit zhi

murphy passing by unnoticed in his peasant garb

ii-25

the world and its ways grow worse each passing day
bad manners push accepted old customs aside
men no longer pluck fragrant cinnamon twigs
but rather grub at the roots of poisonous trees

one should instead plant peaches and plums
whose blooms exalt and uplift mankind
the fates of the powerful rise or they fall
but all living things should strive for perfection

it has been such since the time of guang cheng-zi
some go in and some out of the gates of immortality

murphy choosing a life of modest anonymity

ii-26

the deep green lotus grows in the hidden spring
in the morning sun it glows with a fresh beauty
by autumn its blossoms will cover the small pool
the leaves lying thick over the surging waters

the splendor of this lotus is withdrawn from the world
how will its scent flow out to beguile any others
when she sees the snow fall all around
her red fragrance will again be lost for a year

her roots have yet to find their proper place
she needs to be in a formal flower pond

murphy happily ensconced in his secret cave

ii-27

the kingdoms of yan and zhao have beautiful women
one sits in a high sculpture garden near dark clouds
her eyebrows compare in beauty to the shining moon
when she smiles the walls tremble with pleasure

as always the short life of the flowers distresses her
motionless she begins to weep in the cool autumn winds
with a gracious hand she sadly plucks her jeweled lute
in the early morning her breast shudders a deep sigh

why oh why can she not meet a noble prince
and fly off with him, each on a magical phoenix

murphy still crying at sentimental movies

ii-28

a pretty face will perish, be gone in a flash
the harsh ravager the whirlwind of time
fresh green herbs too soon shrivel, turn white
the sun sets in the west, the moon rises again in the east

the beauties of autumn do not outlast the fall
in a short time become a tangled mess of gray
and such was the fate of holy men and sages of antiquity
one knows that few of them became immortal

the greatest of them were turned into apes and monkeys
the smaller ones became as sand or even insects
only the singular guang cheng-zi
rode the back of a white swan into the clouds

murphy content with his diminished faculties

ii-29

the three kingdoms in their decline were only armed camps
the seven mighty empires at their ends mere muddled messes
how depraved became their rulers from hatred and rage
morals and ethics become unending obscene brawls

the sublime wise men though sought to penetrate heaven's secrets
their high aspirations were to fly up into the purple clouds
confucius himself wished to sail out into the ocean
and my ancestor lao-zi trod the world's shifting sands

both men who obtained wisdom are no longer with us
why should we be saddened over choosing between them

murphy making it up as he goes along

ii-30

a mysterious wind has changed the eminence of high antiquity
principles have become degenerate and will never be restored
the people of these later generations are sore confused
each dawn they come to chang-an, city of four gates

but they know only the bronze-horse gate to the palace
none contemplate finding the island of the immortals, peng-lai
with white heads they will die surrounded by luxury
listening to sweet songs which never seem to end

green wine is laughingly preferred to the elixir of life
their beautiful wives grow old and their pale faces wither
the most learned wield but a clangorous hammer
and approach their graves despite pursuing the ritual odes

lush and green are the three coral trees of peng-lai
but when eyes are blind they cannot be seen

murphy still struggling with the sonnet form

ii-31

zheng-rong wandered through the western pass
his journey to chang-an was not yet at an end
a man on a white horse rode down from the hua-shan mountains
they met one another in the village of ping yuan-li

zheng was asked to give a special ring to the spirits of hao pond
for next year the old dragon, the emperor, would die
the people of chin were then heard to say to each other
people like us finally have something to search for

ao they all went off to find their peach blossom spring
and were separated from the world for thousands of years

murphy scoffing at the very idea of shangri la

ii-32

the guardian spirit of autumn gathers the metal forces of cold
from the west they are seen over the waters of the half moon
the cicada chirrs outside the gate and the windows
i am moved by nature and my sorrow has no end

when will my time come and i receive recognition
for the forces of fate have their malevolent sides
cold weather brings with it a fierceness of wind
and through the long dark night there are no stars

my agony burrows deep, becomes unspeakable
disconsolate i moan until the first gray of dawn

murphy dreading the winter's cold and the ache in his left wrist

ii-33

the northern sea is the home of the giant whale
his body is a thousand feet in length
he spouts a snowstorm from his blowhole
his gaping mouth swallows the waters of a hundred streams

full of contempt he roams through the waves
he terrifies all when he rears into the winds
i watched in awe when he rose high to touch the sky
there seemed no end to the height he reached

murphy retelling the myth of paul bunyan and his giant ox babe

ii-34

orders for conscripting an army came like a shooting star
the tiger seals called the city's magistrates to assemble
men were needed for the alarming threats on the border
where now birds find no peace and sing throughout the night

in the recent past the sun shone brightly on the imperial palace
the three worthy dignitaries led a just administration
both heaven and earth possessed the essence of the dao
the entire world enjoyed a rich exuberant peace

so why one must ask has this disturbance come to pass
the answer is that the kingdom of chu has assembled an army
when the fifth month arrives they will cross the lu river
and then proceed to make war in the south on yun-nan

but our men here make only fearful soldiers
they will find it hard going in the southern regions
they already complain of separation from their parents
they ask the sun and the moon to take pity on them

their tears are finally exhausted, then they weep blood
their parents' hearts are broken, they grow silent in shock
the fatigued animal is easy prey for the tiger
an exhausted fish is simple snack for the passing whale

i see thousands taken away and not a one will come back
when one gives his body to the state, how can he hope to preserve his life
he will dance with sword and shield as once did shun
who was sent away to bring the miao foe to submission

murphy seventeen and in marine corps boot camp

ii-35

an ugly woman set out to imitate a moue of the beautiful xi-shi
when she came home she shocked the entire neighborhood
the students of zhou-ling lost their air of studiousness
and laughed uncontrollably like riff-raff from han-dan

one was a young man who composed elegant rhyme prose
his tendency was to carve elegant insects of philosophy
indeed he would try to produce thorns from a monkey
three long years he worked to compose a suitable song

when he finished the work turned out to be worthless
nothing but fancy clothes draped on a tattooed body
the longer odes of the shi-jing celebrate king wen of zhou
but the melodies of the songs have long been lost

how could material be by produced equal to that of the ying
how may a wind be produced by merely swinging of an axe

murphy taking inspiration where he finds it

ii-36

a certain profligate brought forth a jewel in the chu kingdom
but his reputation as an expert was brought into question
the elegant gem was eventually devalued and discarded
after gratuitously being shown three times to the top officials

the straightest trunk can expect to be chopped down
the fragrant orchid often complains of being burned as incense
what is of consummate worth will be brought down from the heavens
what is sunken into the darkness becomes one with the dao

lu zhong-lian rowed through the deep blue waters
lao-zi rode the purple clouds over the western pass
lu zhong-lian and the archivist of zhou, lao zi
both men of renown relied on true virtue

murphy always leaving more than he takes

ii-37

minister zou yan was wrongly imprisoned in yan
he wept as the frost of autumn came from the heavens
a maligned woman of the common people begged to the blue sky
then rose a great wind which flattened the palace of the prince of qi

absolute truthfulness always has influence
nature responds absolutely to grief
so what blame should i offer myself in the end
i am no longer in the neighborhood of the emperor

scudding clouds darkened the imperial palace
the gleaming sun no longer sends forth its reflections
beautiful pearls now are covered in sand
weeds crowd out delicate fragrant herbs

since ancient times men have been made to suffer
worthless streaming tears wet my sleeves

murphy in the wrong place saying the wrong thing

ii-38

a singular orchid grows in a hidden garden
all the other plants proliferate and overshadow it
although it prospered as it enjoyed the sunshine of spring
now is saddened in the clear moon light of fall

an early frost blankets everything growing
and i wonder if plant life can much longer stay
but then if the cold winds did not blow
what would bring me its delicate perfume

murphy considering the worth of a personal publicity campaign

ii-39

i climb the mountain and look out to the ocean
how infinite seems the earth and the heavens
frost covers the foliage of fall
a cold wind lashes the wasteland below

a sparkling beauty flows east in a stream
nature undulates as the waves in the sea
the bright sun sinks and hides its moving light
my eyes find no rest on the fleeting clouds

swallows and sparrows nest in the wu-tung tree
while the mystical birds dwell in their brier woods
soon again i will begin my return home
belt on my sword and sing my way through this troublesome life

murphy pausing to reflect as he packs his books once again

ii-40

if the phoenix is hungry he eats no millet
he enjoys only fruit from the fabled tree of gems
there he will join his harem of hens
and wrangle with them over their precious food

in the morning he sings in the trees of the kun-lun mountains
in the evening he drinks in the stream on di-zhu island
he flies again to the furthest reaches of the sea
and sleeps alone in the cold ether of the heavens

wang zi-jin fortunately found him in his travels
they formed a friendship beyond the dark clouds
filled with gratitude but never able to fully repay
wang sighed deeply at their inevitable parting

murphy chasing his own rainbow of miracles

ii-41

in the morning so dung-fang frolics in purplish sea mud
in the evening he wears the reddish clouds of sunset
his hands flick and break apart the ruo-mu flower of kun-lun mountain
and thus dims the last splendor of the setting sun

sitting on a cloud he travels the eight outermost regions
his white face shows the passage of a thousand years
buoyant he floats into the limitless infinity
bowing low he approaches the throne of the highest

he requests to be able to visit the heavenly tai-su palace
and to drink from jade cups the nectar of gemstones
and thus prolong his life for ten thousand years
why should he ever think to return to his homeland

for he will forever follow the wind in the distance
enchanted in his flight to and beyond the heavens

murphy hitting the lotto and embarking on slow boat to china

ii-42

two white gulls were seen circling round
singing over the flowing waters of the cang river
it suited them to make friends with men along the shore
could they not be considered cloud cranes

their shadows spend the night on the moonlit sand
as the odor of plants spill out of the islands of spring
my heart is also pure, bathed in the same pale light
i wish forget the world as i too scamper about

murphy preparing his lean-to for a week on the lake

ii-43

king mu of zhou had a thirst for far flung lands
han emperor wu dignified the mantle of the son of heaven
there were no limits to the joy within their hearts
it is unnecessary to mention their wild courage

the queen mother mu wang hosted a feast on the west lake
the fairy shang-yuan invited han wu-di to the northern palace
the jasper lake heard songs which have long since faded away
it is mere idle talk to speak of the fabled jade cup

the wonderful paths of yore are long since overgrown by weeds
the lonely thousand year old souls still yammering away

murphy skeptical of the lore of ancient wisdom

ii-44

green ivy in a luxuriant growth
encircling the pine and cypress trees
the vines firmly rooted in the ground
though they will not survive the winter cold

what does a woman do about the coldness of her man
her beauty like a blushing peach waiting
motionless she sings softly to herself
her pale face a flower in full bloom

her upswept hair still showing no white
how can the poor woman rekindle his love

murphy staring at the full munificence of summer green

ii-45

a cyclonic wind roars toward the furthest regions of the earth
all of nature shrivels and begins to die
the driving clouds obscure the setting sun
titanic waves convulse the eastern sea

the phoenix and dragons have escaped their nets
circling in the maelstrom knowing not where to land
i mount my white colt and prepare to leave this place
to sing in the lonely mountains of beansprouts in the garden

murphy becoming the hermit he has always meant to be

ii-46

throughout the last 140 years
while the majesty of the empire shone forth
the palace of the five phoenixes was neglected
while shen-si, land of the three streams, stood powerful

the nobility scintillated at the court
guests gathered thick as clouds and smoke
trained cocks fought in the emperor's palace
ritual games were held beneath the jasper terrace

the sun itself was outshone by the glittering festivities
the revelers' noise rode high to the heavens
those in high positions danced for only a brief moment
once out of favor they were never seen again

though the solitary yang xiong an earlier officer of the guard
shut his gate and wrote the estimable tai xuan jing

murphy throwing tidbits of self out his kitchen window

ii-47

peach blossoms fill the eastern garden
smiling they praise a splendrous sun
suddenly they receive the spring wind's favor
unfurled to all in their nascent beauty

their color rivals the young maiden's blush
the only disquiet is for how perishable the blooms
for summer's heat will come in its own good time
they will wither away, be spoiled and gone

i think of a pine tree high in the southern mountains
standing alone in its greenness, and i grieve

murphy eying his old man's splotchy hands

ii-48

emperor qin shi-huang relied on his precious sword
anger made his majestic authority greatly feared
in search of the place of the sunset he ransacked the west
he piled rocks into sea dikes in order to walk over them

he wasted his soldiers and emptied the nine provinces
he built a bridge which cost tens of thousands of lives
and everything was to try to find the fabled peng-lai
when did he ever think of the spring crops in shao-hao

he exhausted his strengths and never achieved lasting benefits
after a thousand years his history is still filled with sorrow

murphy tall enough not to have a napoleon complex

ii-49

the beautiful maiden left her southern kingdom
her charm as shimmering as supple water lilies
yet her warm smile is no longer to be seen
she preserved the purity of her heart in vain

earlier she was a maiden in the emperor's palace
her black eyebrows envied by all who saw her
now she is returned home to the clear xiang river
there losing herself in song why should she complain

the land of the southern regions is beautiful
her charm remains that of blooming peaches and plums
mornings she walks the north shore of the river
in the evenings she sleeps on an island in the xiang

these rough times think nothing of a peach blossom face
why should they show their white teeth in a smile
as years pass us by they seem but an eye blink
rely not on splendor and beauty to last

murphy remembering trotting around the bases after hitting a homer

ii-50

in the kingdom of song to the east of the wu-tai terrace
there in the land of the yan stones lived a farmer
his pride was the treasures found in his earth
he laughed at the jewels of the king of zhao

their color was from bathing in inks and then being polished
the yan stones thus showed no true nobility
this confusing world has many absurdities
but one should know the difference between alabaster and jade

murphy knowing only that turquoise is sky blue

ii-51

zhou-xin of yin sinned against the mandate of heaven
likewise king huai of qu was sometimes deluded
though marvelous animals of yi-yang filled the wilderness
the emperor's palace was filled with thistles and weeds

pi gan presented himself before zhou-xin and was slashed to death
qu ping took refuge at the headwaters of the xiang river
why should one be attracted to the maw of the tiger
qu-ping's sister tried to calm him with soothing words

peng-xian had long before been drowned
who else had pi gan shared his intentions with

murphy watching the soaps on a rainy afternoon

ii-52

in the spring streams rushed past, freshened
summer fulfilled the effulgence of nature
i cannot bear now to see the thistledown of fall
as they willy-nilly swirl through the air without purpose

the sun and the winds have blighted the orchids
glittering dew dampened mallows and bean sprouts
i can expect no beneficent timely gift of beauty
trees and greenery grow every day more withered

murphy an old man aching as he waits on winter

ii-53

what chaos is seen in the history of the warring states
their swirling battles as confused as seething clouds
the kingdom of zhao relied on the two tigers lin and lian
the state of jin was divided among six high dignitaries

disloyal ministers rose up to try to seize the throne itself
coteries were formed, men gathered followers in order to fight
and then there came tian cheng-zi
who one morning slew the king of qi

murphy pondering the emergence of caligula

ii-54

my sword at my side i climb to the high terrace
my eye wanders over the wide lands of springtime
a worthless green underbrush covers the hills
the wondrous herbs hidden deep in the valleys

the phoenix sings over the western waters
he wishes to land but finds no nobility of trees
the ravens though are clamorous there
among the aromatic herbs thousands are perched

the sun no longer shines on the degenerate polity of jin
i am at the end of my road, weeping and in pain

murphy limping away from a defeat on the football field

ii-55

in the kingdom of qi they plucked the song of the east
the strings of the jin empire played the song of the west
self same wishes were expressed in both performances
each and every person filled with wild desires

the musicians seduced the downtrodden people
excitement was engendered in those who listened
each singular smile was seen as a glittering jewel
a thousand pieces of gold shone in each repeating of the song

men cherished their pleasures and shunned their duties
they paid no attention to the cycles of the sun and the moon
they knew not the wanderer in the purple clouds lao zi
who plucked his unadorned zither on the jasper terrace

murphy preferring acoustic guitars over electric

ii-56

the wanderer in the land of yue found the bright coral
and brought it with him from the southern hinterlands
it shone with the clarity of the moon reflected on a calm lake
availability pf this precious material roiled the capital

the princes all desired to mount it on the hilt of their swords
those who obtained it sighed with a deep satisfaction
only the purity of a woman's eye rivaled its clarity
and the hearts of the others were made anxious in envy

murphy wearing his faded jeans as camouflage

ii-57

nature provides for all the bird kingdom
small and large, all have their chance at life
the zhou-zhou bird as well as the others
yet i want his six long tail feathers

i need them to help me fly like a bird
and using them to fly over the huang he
that bird flies, why should i not
i sigh at the thought of my safe landing

murphy dreaming again he can soar into the air to wherever he wishes

ii-58

when i visited the peninsula of the wu shan mountains
i searched for traces of antiquity and climbed to the yang terrace
there were no clouds to be seen in the heavens
a cool wind blew from the distant regions of earth

the elves left this place long, long before
king xiang, however, might have left some of his spirit behind
all the wild passions of yore have long since vanished
now only wood fellers and shepherds give voice to complaints

murphy pensively walking the battlefield of gettysburg

ii-59

yang zi wept bitterly at the sight of the crossroads
mo zi complained loudly at the sight of white silk
for the crossroads opens the way to either the north or the south
and the white silk can easily be made into any color

all things demonstrate the same potential
the life of a man can be long or cut short
tian fen and dou ying strove for supremacy
friends turned to one and then the other

the ways of the world are often topsy-turvy
and all friendships have their ups and downs
to a beaker of wine man says a hearty yes
but the inner heart is always confused at the end

all birds make their way down blossom filled branches
yet a fish in need is left to be in dried up ponds
consider your friends who are looking for pleasure
bustling about they ask which way do i go

murphy finally cured of looking for a better party