

li bai iii-01

grief caused by wide separation

the grief caused by wide separation occurred long before
in ancient times to the daughters o huang and nu ying
south of the dung-ting lake on the banks of the rivers hsiao and hsiang
their grief as deep and bottomless as the ocean

who would deny the pain of their separation
the sun bacame less bright, clouds darkened the sky
apes cried in the mists, demons screamed in the rain
no matter if i tried how could i change this

i fear my loyal heart knows not the will of heaven
as now the thunder rumbles, roars in its anger
yao and shun were able yet the throne went to yu
when the ruler loses a minister the dragon becomes a fish

power is changed in the hands of the minister, the rat become a tiger
shun retired to the wilderness of cang wu and died
the mountains there all look the same
where is the grave of shun who lost his two pupils

o huang and nu ying are in the dark clouds never to return
they are dissolved in pain looking over the mountains of cang wu
even if the mountains erupt and the xiang ceases to flow
their tear stains will never disappear from the bamboo

murphy taking lessons from the murky depths of history

7/29/2010 9:46 AM

li bai iii-02

to the tune “do not go by the river my lord“

the huang he came from the west through the kun lun mountains
after a thunderous ten thousand miles it bounced off the dragon gate
yao himself sighed as its waves surged up to heaven, great yu
created the myriad streams then abandoned his unruly newborns

only after the raging currents were conquered and the endless flood reduced
then there were the nine provinces where silkworms bred and hemp was grown
only as the great flood receded did the storms abate and the earth appear
why then did the old man with disheveled hair play such a fool

he is the one who in the early morning rushed straight for the river
none of the bystanders held him back, only his wife said to him
“do not go by the river, my lord,” but he wanted to cross right then
even a tiger my be slain with bare hands, but without a boat the river will kill

the lord could be seen taken by the waves, his body going to sea
then came a whale flashing his teeth like snowy mountains
in them the lord, oh the lord, does hang
sadly, sadly, play the harp, for he never returns

murphy wondering how he survived his impetuous youth

7/29/2010 11:58 AM

li bai iii-03

difficulties on the road to the land of shu

i

be fearful of the dangers
great are the difficulties on the road to the land of shu
more difficult than to climb up into the blue sky
can cong and yu fu those first rulers of shu
built their empire there in the misty distance
since then 48,000 years passed by
while trade with the borderlands of qin was impossible
in the west tai bo shan mountain allowed only birds a way past
only they could fly over the peaks of o mei shan
then the earth cracked, rocks split, and brave men could come over and through
later bridges and ladders were built for the most difficult places

ii

above the road is the great rock where xi he made the solar car drawn by six dragons
below is the maelstrom with thunderous waves and swirling eddies
even the high flying yellow crane cannot fly over here
and the otherwise clever monkeys cannot find their way through
then comes the qing ni ling pass with its hairpin turns
for every hundred steps nine bends, high rocks above, deep chasms below
looking up one sees gemini and orion in the sky
one gasps in awe since they are seemingly close enough to touch
one presses one's hand over the heart, sits and heaves a great sigh

iii

i ask you as you wander to the west, when will you return
i fear that you will not be able to scale the terrible mountains
you are the bird who calls in the ancient forest
the male has flown away and the female circles in the trees
the cuckoo in the barren mountains crying her grief in the moonlight
yes, the difficulties on the road to the land of shu
they are greater than the ascent to the heavens
when people hear about the task their rosy cheeks wither
the peaks rise raggedly to barely a foot from heaven
rotten spruce trees hang crown down from the steep rocks
waterfalls compete for attention with their cascading roars
crashing waves howl against the rocks, thunder sends an avalanche into the gorge
each man there sees danger all around
oh you traveler to that distant place
why did you decide on this destination

murphy free repelling from the overhanging rockface, just because

8/20/2010 8:56 AM

li bai iii-04

the song from mount liang fu

i sing an extended song from mount liang fu
when will the spring return to me

i

have you not seen
the old butcher of zhao go leave us
he was 84 when he came to the wei river to fish
he rued the white hair he saw reflected in the clear waters
with wen wang he enthusiastically discussed governmental affairs
and caught a myriad of fish with his lines
his character matched that of wen wang
a wise man he became a tiger when he discussed stupidity
and yet to all outward appearance he was an ordinary person

ii

have you not seen
li yi zhi the drinking brother of gao yang who rose from the grass
and made his deep bow at giang su before liu bang
the man with the eagle nose who later became emperor han gao zu
when li entered he cast himself down and proclaimed his bold plans
two girls were washing liu bang's feet
but when he heard li he came forward like the wind
in the east he subjugated 72 cities of qi on the advise of li
and annexed qu and han like they were crowned seeds for the picking
but then a weak-willed madman succeeded li yi zhi
only an able man should be put in charge of a gallant band
i wanted to approach heaven to see the illustrious ruler
but the thundergod made the heavens throb with a terrible noise
while next to him many young women were at play
three times he laughed aloud and lightning flashed in all directions
suddenly it was dark and a storm crashed all around
i could not pass through the nine gates of heaven
i pounded against them with my forehead but the gateman was angry

iii

the bright son of heaven knows my honor not and takes me for another
that other man from qi for no reason feared the sky falling on him
the monster ya yu bares his teeth and looks for human flesh
the fabulous animal zou yu dodges without stirring a blade of grass
with my left hand i grab the fleeing monkey
with the right i deal with the spotted tiger
hesitating at the edge of the abyss i speak of danger
the knower can restrain himself, the fool will rush to be a hero
the world thinks of me as being light as eiderdown
but only three brave men were strong enough to move the southern mountain
the minister of qi was killed with the help of two peaches
wu and chu revolted without a leader such as zhi meng
zhou ya fu at first laughed at such feeble efforts

iv

yes, the song from mount liang fu has a truly sad melody
both dragon swords of zhang hua were necessary to restore order
circumstances of the time brought forth men such as tai gong
such men must offer useful service when the regime is in danger

murphy offering advice only after being asked the ritual four times

8/21/2010

li bai iii-05

crows cry at night

in the gathering dusk crows fly to roost near the city wall
raucous cawings issue from their nests deep within the branches
a young woman bends to her loom as once did the wife from the land of qin
the window's green silk gauze holds in the smoke of evening
the shuttle stops, the weaver quiet, remembering the man in the distance
another night in her lonely room, tears glistening on her face

murphy in bitter anxiety waiting up for his teen age daughter

8/20/2010 9:33 AM

li bai iii-06

crows settle in their evening roost

in the pleasure palace of gu su the crows go to their evening roost
the king of wu is still in the chambers of the drunken xi shi
although the setting sun is half over the blue mountains
the songs of wu and the dances of chu still spend their passions
the silver arrow of the water clock shows much water has flowed
as one rises from the banquet to see the morning moon sink into the milky way

murphy never knowing when to quit partying

8/21/2010 9:35 AM

li bai iii-07

“fighting to the south of the city”
(a common title for antiwar poems from ancient times)

in recent years battles were fought to the source of the sang gan
this year we fought to the courses of the pamir rivers
now we clean our weapons in the waves of the lakes of the tiao zhi
and let the horses graze on the snowy steppes of tian shan

but in those ten thousand miles of campaigns and battles
the entire army has grown old and emaciated
the huns consider murder and killing a natural vocation
since ancient times white bones were left in their yellow sands

in the land where the house of qin built the great wall
signal fires still burned in the time of the han
and they are burning still, still not extinguished
campaigns and battles will never come to an end

men die in the scuffling melee of battle
wounded, screaming horses everywhere, riderless in agony
crows and falcons rip into men's guts
officers and men offal on the grassy plain

the generals decisions are worthless
one sees that weapons are tools of evil
that moral men are used against their will

murphy at a peacenik rally in central park in 1968

8/21/2010 11:09 AM

li bai iii-08

the offering of wine

a song's name from the time of the han (indicating the type of poem involved)

i

you see friends it is not that the waters of the yellow river comes from the heavens
and flows quickly into the sea to never return
you see friends it is not that one complains in the chambers before the mirrors
that hair in the morning was black silk but is now only snow
in times of happiness in life one must welcome the taste of its fullness
never let the golden cup become empty before the face of the moon
since the heavens have given me gifts there is certainly a use for me
the gifts that raise me to heaven must certainly be useful
if a thousand pieces of gold are spent they will come back
boil a sheep, slaughter a cow, let us rejoice
now each of us should drink 300 cups of this wine

ii

master cen and friend tan qiu
i offer you wine, don't let your cup run dry
i sing to you friends this song
i ask you friends to bend your ears and listen to me
music and gourmet food are not the most important things
always be drunk and never stop the roistering, that is my only wish
the saints and sages of antiquity have faded into quietude
only those who drank have bequeathed us their names

iii

the prince of chen was on a drinking binge on the ping lo balcony
an ever so costly jereboam of wine flowed and brought with it a supreme joy
who there would then say the host has no more money
the quickest way to get some wine is for him to pour it for you

my precious horse and my fur coat are worth another great jug
send the servant boy to exchange them for another
so we can all continue to ease our eternal grief

murphy in his sophomore year hovering around the keg at the weekly beer bust

8/22/2010 7:54 AM

li bai iii-09

reckless and on the hunt

the young men in border towns
learn not one single line of the classics
they know only hunting, and pride themselves on their craft and speed
the horses of the border are fat in autumn feasting on the border grasses

how proud the young bucks are when their shadows come along for the hunt
they sweep away the snow with their golden whips whistling through the air
half drunk they call their falcons and ride out from the town
they never draw their bows in vain, their arrows always tell

their bold fearlessness is known throughout the desert regions
no scholarly man can approach these knight errants in their bravery
hiding their heads in books until they turn white is not for them

murphy playing sports all day, reading books all night

8/22/2010 8:13 AM

li bai iii-10

the song of the flying dragons (1of 2)

emperor huang di fired his tripods in the jing shan mountains
he smelted the philosopher's stone
and from this stone came yellow gold
then the emperor ascended a dragon and flew into the heavens

the clouds mourned, the sea was lost in thought, men sighed
in the palace the harem women turned their flower faces to the sky
whirling they raised their arms toward the purple clouds
carried by the wind they flew there and entered the phoenix car

they climbed into the phoenix car
and remained in the retinue of the emperor huang di
their journey a promenade in the dark blue sky
their joy cannot be described

murphy believing in three miracles before sitting down to breakfast

8/22/2010 8:28 AM

li bai iii-11

the song of the flying dragons (2 of 2)

when huang di left this earth bound existence he took both bow and sword
the people of antiquity felt he left with all his earthly circumstance
the graceful beauties of the harem, so many blooming faces
rose on the phoenix car with him to never return

riding on the dragon huang di climbed to the gates of heaven
when he arrived at the gate he heard the heavenly language
his harem filled countless cars as numberless as clouds and waves
his harem ladies filled all the cars

and they came into the highest spheres of the purple emperor
and the purple emperor gave them the secret of the elixir of eternity
which has to be prepared by the white rabbit of the moon
when one enjoys it he will outlive the sun, moon, and stars

one can look then down from the heavens on the jasper pond and see xi wang mu
whose eyebrows are a confused white such as in a tangle of bitter herbs

murphy doubting either an afterlife or reincarnation

8/23/2010 8:27 AM

li bai iii-12

the heavenly horse

the heavenly horse comes from the caves of tocharistan
his rump has tiger spots, his bones thick and strong as a dragon
he neighs to shake the clouds
he shakes his dark full mane
his splendid muscles and integrity show in his silent gait
although he climbs the kun lun, all the way to the extreme western lands
his legs make not one misstep
at dawn he runs in yan, he is fed in yue that afternoon
his gait is marvelous, his legs reduced to a blur

the heavenly horse snorts and cavorts like a flying dragon
his eye gleams like the planet venus, his chest pumps like two ducks awaddle
his tail streaks out like a meteor, his head shaped like a cradle for wine
he surpasses the dragons of the yi jing as they gallop through the streets of heaven
his trappings are furnished with gold, a moon ornament graces his head
his delight is to run without measure throughout the entire kingdom
he who dares to buy him must have a white gem the size of a mountain
he ducks his head and laughs at the fastest of the others
and considers them all slow and cumbersome

the heavenly horse runs free and desires the house of his master
in full gallop he suddenly rears and paws toward the flying clouds
his legs carry him for a thousand miles and can go no further
in the distance he sees the gates of the imperial palace
he stands in the glory of the afternoon slant of sun

white clouds fleck the deep blue sky
the powerful presence of mountains in the distance
a salt wagon is drawn up the steepest slope
it falters but is willing to be used more despite the fall of night
bo lao has once been faithful and will yet return to his proper place
in his youth he gave his all and is now rejected
if he were to meet with dian zi fang
he would be sympathetic to the cause
even if he were to have the grain basket of kun lun
his hunger would not be appeased
the severe frost of the fifth month has browned the cassia
full of resentment, bent over the feeding trough, he knits his eyebrows
i beg of you, resolve this issue, pay attention to mu wang
that he may yet dance in the sun by the jasper lake

murphy always there, always faithful to the cause

8/24/2010 8:20 AM

li bai iii-13

the difficulty of following the path (1 of 3)

for my gold cup i have ten thousand flagons of wine
my jade bowls are filled with exquisite delicacies
i set my cup aside, put down my chopsticks, and look to savor life
i take my sword, look all around, my heart is pounding
i wish to visit tai hang shan mountain, always covered in snow
i wish to relax and cast my fishing line in the green river
suddenly i wish to board a ship and sail over the sun in a dream
but finding the one right way is hard
finding the one right way is difficult
for there are too many side paths which beckon
when the time is favorable, when the wind controls the waves
then i will raise the sails and go out onto the deep blue sea

murphy puffing on his pipe in the shade of a summer afternoon

8/24/2010 8:34 AM

li bai iii-14

the difficulty of following the path (2 of 3)

the high road is open to anyone as is the blue sky
i alone cannot bring myself to step upon it
i am ashamed i do not follow the example of the children of chang an
and enjoy the holidays at cockfights, dog racing, eating pears and chestnuts
feng huan beat time with his sword as he wrote his plaintive song
zou yang held forth his criticism before the doors of the prince's antechamber
the people in the marketplace of huai yan laughed at the coward han xin
the high dignitaries of the han dynasty hated jia yi

have you not seen
in ancient times the rulers of yan honored minister guo wei
and as zou yan came the king swept the floor in grateful homage of his arrival
zhi xin and yo yi were both moved by this grace
pledged all their worth and did their best for the ruler
but zhao wang was dead and weeds covered his bleached bones
who swept then the gold terrace where he had piled gold for the wise men of the world
finding the correct way is difficult
better to return to the homeland

murphy looking to the past to see his way forward

8/24/2010 8:52 AM

li bai iii-15

the difficulty of following the path (3 of 3)

do not wash your ears in the ying stream as once did xu yu
do not eat the wild ferns of shan yang mountain as did bo yi and shu qi
to refrain from renown in this chaos of life is noble but inglorious
but what good is lonely greatness, it causes not the light of the moon through the clouds

when i consider the outstanding men of antiquity
i find that all who did not retire from duties died an unnatural death
wu yuan fell on his sword and his body was thrown into the yang zi
qu yuan threw himself into the floods of the xiang river

no one rescued the excellent spirit lu zhi from the executioner
bei li si lasted a long time as his luck held, but misery visited him in his later life
the sighs of lu zhi: who can now bear to hear the cries of cranes in the valley of hua ting
the last words of li xu: the sad rhapsody of his blue falcon outside the shang cai gate

have you not heard of zhang han from giang su who was an exceptionally intelligent man
when the autumn winds came from the land of qi he remembered his home
and stated often in his life his preference for wine instead of fame
what good was it to him to be known for a thousand years after his death

murphy carefully keeping his head below the lip of the trench

8/25/2010 8:18 AM

li bai iii-16

i think of you incessantly

i think of you incessantly
you who are now in chang an
crickets weep there in autumn outside the water balcony

here a slight frost makes me shiver as cold radiates from the mat
the dim lamp offers no light and wishes me to go out
i roll up the curtain and release my sighs to the the moon
the maiden beautiful as a flower waits just beyond the clouds
high above stretches the darkness of the heavens
below i see the surging waves of the winding river
the heavens are infinite, the way is long, and the soul complains on its travels
the soul which moves in its dreams cannot get past the mountains to see his beloved

i think of you incessantly
and these thoughts tear at my guts

murphy marooned in pennsylvania anxious to go get married in new york city

8/25/2010 8:42 AM

li bai iii-17

the song of shang liu tian

when i approached shang liu tian
i saw towering mounds surrounding the lonely grave
what i felt was regret for those of the ancient world
who never again would experience the green of spring grass

the whirling wind came from all sides
and my soul was torn by the soft white noise of the weeping willows
i asked who owns this piece of ground
who is buried in this hallowed place

and old man told me the following
he said that is shang liu tian
instead of the hero's mound only flat weedy clumps of earth
in the past the younger brother died and the older wished not to bury him

only mourning flags of strangers surrounded his interment
if a bird dies crying, a hundred other birds cry
when an animal runs away, a hundred others scatter
birds of huan shan mountain cried during the parting

they wanted to leave but flew back because they couldn't bear the separation
earlier when the tian brothers parted in haste from one another
lightning split the judas tree in the courtyard of their house
remarkably a similar rift is shown by the jiao rang tree

if the eastern branches wither, the western come into bloom
if unconscious nature shows such things to us
why then should the sons of emperor gao xin use celestial weapons on each other
shu qi and ji zha both wanted the throne without harming his brother and thus were honored

noble role models shine on us from the distance
waves that reach us and influence through their purity
do not sing to me a song of hostile brothers
i wil cover my ears, i will not listen

murphy sharing everything equally as he was taught

8/26/2010 8:32 AM

li bai iii-18

song of spring

the lofty halls of the imperial palace rise from the depths to pierce the sky
dragons fashioned from gold twist around the beautiful ornate columns
a beautiful young maiden enjoys the sunshine through the window
her fingers stroke the strings of the great zither

the spring breeze carries the tune to the ruler's ears
it is "the song of the heavenly heights"
the emperor, inspired, rows out on the sky pond to the blessed islands
he takes the boat with the high railings to protect against the high waves

he takes many of his young women along, singing and laughing
bells ring, drums are beaten so loudly they shake the palace walls
it is time for the people to sing and dance together in the glorious time of peace
the light hand of the ruler allows the people to live in friendship

the 36 emperors of the heavens gather to await the emperor
the immortals arrive on the boat and emerge from their cloud car
but the sovereign does not leave and stays in the old capital
how else might he become a second yellow emperor

he alone ascends into the inscrutable heavens
state officials prostrate themselves, wish for him to endure as a mountain
may his majesty live forever in great renown

murphy in england raising his glass in a toast to the king

8/26/2010 11:22 AM

li bai iii-19

the song "before us a cup of wine" (1 of 2)

suddenly a spring breeze reaches me from the east
it raises delicate wavelets in my cup's clear golden wine
fallen petals swirl in confusion around me
the young maiden already drunk, her face reddened by the wine
how quickly gone are the peach and plum blossoms by the blue pavilion
passing time does not look back on the people who do not use it
come, friends, rouse oneself to dance
the sun is already in the west
one should gambol away one's youth
one sighs when one's hair turns white as silk

murphy diving in the river in his joy of morning

8/27/2010 9:23 AM

li bai iii-20

the song "before us a cup of wine" (2 of 2)

a great zither of chestnut wood from dragon gate mountain is playing
the marvelous wine in the jade pitchers is so clear they seem empty
i drink here with you to the plaintive sounds of the strings
colors dance before my eyes, the maiden's cheeks redden to a blush
the face of the waitress from the western deserts like a flower fresh bloomed
standing by the wine table she smiles in the fresh spring breeze
her smile is the fresh spring breeze
she dances in her thin silk dress
my friend you need to get drunk with me here
where else is there to go

murphy reduced to a mere voyeur in his dotage

8/27/2010 9:45 AM

li bai iii-21

i stay the night singing by myself

this winter night is cold, drags on and on
lost in thought i sit alone in the northern hall
the spring's fountain is iced over, moonlight penetrates the women's quarters
the golden wall lamp with its congealed oil illuminates my tears
the golden wall lamp dies out
the tears grow stronger, become sobbing
i suppress my sounds of sadness
and remind myself of your songs
especially their melodic tones
and i have those feelings
my emotions and these sounds harmonize
my being has no discord
but it is not the words that come to my consciousness
your many songs send the dust flying in the rafters

murphy rereading yeats aloud to appreciate the mastery

8/30/2010 8:01 AM

li bai iii-22

song of the oriole of the steppes

if you wander do not follow the kingfisher of yan zhou
if you settle down stay away from the swallows of the palace of wu
when the wu palace burns your nest will be destroyed
when you follow the kingfisher you will stumble into traps and nets
stay alone with your two wings in under the herbs of the fields
even if a hawk or vulture flies by, what can happen to you there

murphy in bootcamp crawling through the obstacle course under live gunfire

8/30/2010 8:15 AM

li bai iii-23

pipa song

if you wish to visit heaven do not climb on the dragon's back
if you wish to climb a mountain do not ride the wild tiger
this remains unchanged when friendship between high and low penetrates the heart
as was the case with yan ling and emperor guang wu di

zhou gung is hailed as a great sage
and he showed a bit of mercy to guan shu and cai shu
even that one bushel of millet mentioned in the han dynasty song
yet he smashed huai nan li wang and sent him to die in exile

what is the difference between brothers on the street
how could my heart find a way to follow such models
between other people and our small singular heart
there are thousands of layers, even mountains and seas

it is facile to say you trust in your friends
when you stand before them you stand among nine similar mountains
in nature many blossoms must fall early in the spring
peaches and plums cannot be compared to spruce

the two friends guan zhong and bao shu ya are long dead
who will follow in their footsteps and act as they did

murphy when push comes to shove trusting only to family and clan

8/31/2010 8:39 AM

li bai iii-24

morning flight of the pheasant

in the third month as the furrows of wheat are beginning to green
a white pheasant flies from his nest with his two hens
his feathers a brocade silk dress, how wonderful his graceful youth
a shepherd collecting wood is startled and cries out

how beautiful the spring weather
how cheerful the bright shining sun
and as the pheasant feeds his fighting spirit grows
rival males fight to the death, til one beautiful neck hangs down

the shepherd seeks his instrument and plays the song “zhi zi ban”
“the rotten willow, brittle willow, sends out only suckers
i have seventy years and sit here still all alone”
plucking his strings he succumbs to melancholy

he closes his eyes in the middle of song
slumps and returns to the yellow mud

murphy listening to gunny explain that esprit de corps keeps one alive in the worst of battle

8/31/2010 9:02 AM

li bai iii-25

the melody “flying in the clouds”

i

in the west in the realm of shao hao is where the bright sun rests
nearer to the west is an old man of sogdiana, son of turkestan, where the moon goes down
his appearance inspires awe
his features sharply chiseled
his eyes emit a shimmering green glow
his temple hair is blond and curly
his eyelashes are long and shadow the eyes
his nose bends to a bold sweep of the lips
who made this man with these remarkable features
he breaks the normal boundaries of natural form

ii

wen kang is the divine exalted father of this old man from sogdiana
the original force for his being is wen kang's forebears
he is the latest to have the distinctive hairline of pan gu
he has laid his hand on the chariot and given it new impetus
he has seen the sun and the moon when they were created
both were formed by melting of fire and water
the sun crow had not risen from his dark hidden valley to shine forth
the moon rabbit still had half his grief well hidden
nu wa played with the yellow earth
and formed the foolish people of this world
sent them scattering in every possible direction
in fine particles such as sand and dust
the people who are born and die continuously
who does not understand that this old man from turkestan is a true immortal
who has planted in the western seas the ruo mu trees
and in the eastern seas the fu sang trees
many years have passed since he left those areas
for the branches and leaves of those trees reach for thousands of miles

iii

the middle kingdom has seen seven emperors in the tang dynasty
and now is half way through the mess of an lu shan
emperor su zong ascended the throne through heaven's grace
as a dragon he flew back to regain chang an
after an lu shan's death the rebels made his son an qing xu their ruler
as guang wu di rose from the white water at zao yang
so the emperor's wrath has set the whole world into a thundering motion
huge storm waves have come to sweep away the rebels
and emperor su zong sets foot on the imperial throne
and the passes at the kingdom's borders open wide in peace

iv

the old man from sogdiana is stirred by imperial virtue
he brings marvelous things from the east
five colored lions are his dogs, nine varieties of phoenix his hens
singing and dancing they fly to the imperial residence
like falling rain they bend one way and then the other
they sing sogdanian songs
they offer Chinese wine
they kneel on both knees
they rest on both elbows
they scatter flowers with hands raised toward heaven
they greet the dragon mien of the emperor
they wish him a long life
let the stars of the milky way writhe in the sky
let chong nan mountain of chang an split
heaven's son will live many thousands of years
and always drink from the cup of longevity

murphy believing seven impossibilities before noon

9/1/2010 1:02 PM

li bai iii-26

song for the tune “the white dove”

strike the sounding bell
rouse the bright toned drum
sing the song of the white dove
dance with the feathery fans

what can compare to the white of the dove
the back is as frost, the breast is as snow
no priceless rarity can ever come close
she feeds her brood of seven, all with equal care
she eats slowly with elegant ease
she is by nature gentle and calm
work starts in the fields when her call is heard
she summons the spring

the son of heaven buries carved images of jade
the image of the turtle buried to bestow honor on white haired elders

but the whiteness of the white heron is not a pure white
his outward color is pure but his heart knows no kindness
he lacks the five virtues
he cannot proclaim the dawn
and why does he eat the fish with purple scales hidden beneath the reeds
hawks, kites, vultures and fish eagles rapaciously kill
even the phoenix, although a great sage
is not one to consider for counsel

murphy cooing softly as he dreams of peace

9/1/2010 3:52 PM

li bai iii-27

the song of sunrise and sunset

the sun rises from beyond the eastern bay
it springs forth from the deep
then soars across the sky to disappear into the western sea
where most likely his six dragons rest
from beginning of day to the end he knows no rest
only ones who have within themselves a divine power
could withstand such lengths of rising and falling
the grass is not graced by the spring wind with flowers
the tree is not angry with autumn for its withering
noone brandishes the whip to set the four seasons in motion
the rise and fall of the whole of nature is spontaneous

oh xi he

oh xi he

is it not like when you rise and sink through the waves with wild desire
the duke of lu yang was able to swing his spear and halt the sun
many pretenders forego the right path to act against heaven
i wish however to hold heaven and earth together
and am determined to become at one with the chaos

murphy wanting it all and wanting it right now

9/2/2010 10:21 AM

li bai iii-28

there are no more people in the land of the barbarians

a sharp winter storm brought frost so even the desert plants were withered
sinew and wood of the bows stiffened in the cold, the horses climbed to the west
300,000, the number of men in the army of the han dynasty
their general and leader he xu bing

white feathered arrows hung from his hip, his shooting stars
the scabbard of his sword polished to the luster of flowers
the imperial troops advanced through the snow of yu men guan pass
the arrows of the enemy fell thick as a sand storm and penetrated armor

but the battle discipline of the han achieved complete victory
venus entered the moon, the fiends could be destroyed
the fiends could be annihilated

the constellation of the pleiades disappeared
we stood around the bodies of the barbarians
we waded in their blood
we hung them high in the blue sky
we buried them in the purple barrier of the great wall

there are no more people in the land of the barbarians
and the sovereignty of the han prevails

murphy dismayed at ethnic cleansing in the modern world

9/2/2010 1:30 PM

li bai iii-29

the song of the north wind

the dragon with the burning torch perches on han men mountain at the north pole
his light shines with the dim light of the morning's birth
the sun and moon shine, why don't they light the far, far north
there only the turbulent north wind tormenting the heavens

in the mountains of yan the snowflakes are as big as pillows
this wind brings them to fall on the xuan yuan terrace
a patient wife sits thoughtfully there in the last month of the year
she sings but never laughs, her eyebrows severely contracted

she leans on a gate and watches the passers by thinking of her husband
the cold and hardship beyond the great wall is truly cause for lamentations
her husband took his sword and went to help at the border
while only his metal tiger skin quiver was returned

in it were found two white feathered arrows
spiderwebs spun around them covered with dust
the arrows useless to her and he fallen in battle
he will never return

she could not bring herself to look at such items
they were burned and are now nothing but ash
one can plug a dam for the huang he river with clay
but when the north wind brings snow, nothing will stop it

murphy walking the snowy streets of cambridge with holes in his shoes

9/2/2010 2:52 PM

li bai iii-30

flowers

the cavalry of zhao wear thick tassels on their caps
the slightly curved swords of wu shine like frost and snow
their silver saddles gleam on their white horses
they loose their arrows in swarms of shooting stars
every ten steps they kill an enemy
they have come for a thousand miles and no one has stopped them
when they finish their work they shake their clothes and leave
they keep themselves and their doings deeply hidden

open-eyed they go before the prince of xing ling
ungirdle their swords and lay them across their knees
or they offer zhu hai tidbits of precious meat
with hou ying they stand to drink with cup in hand
after three cups they promise to move the unshakeable five mountains

murphy never betting on the other man's trick, only on his own

9/4/2010 7:53 AM