

li bai v-01

“a guest coach and horses arrive at the gates” a song

a guest coach and horses arrive at the gates
the gold bedecked saddles glisten over the red lacquered wheels
one could say the guest descends in glory from the sky
but in reality it is a relative visiting from our ancestral home

i let the boys sweep the central hall before him
and when the guest is seated i pour out my worries
the wine for two has been served and is at hand
but the cups are set down as tears fill our handkerchiefs

i bemoan my wanderings over thousands of miles
my restless nature for these past thirty years
i discuss what i know of the future plans of the emperor
explain the purple sash of a minister's seal still adorning my belt
report on the strategy of tai gong in the dust of the deserts

yet i am lonely and abandoned, without official communication
i have become a vagabond on the banks of the xiang river
i ask how do the members of our clan fare these days
many, i have heard, have begun the journey to the underworld

throughout their lives many of them engaged in hundreds of battles
now in death they have settled in the land of a thousand demons
the north winds brought the sands of the desert to becloud
lo yang and chang an the capitals of ancient zhou and qin

fate is like that
knowledge of the heavens brings no mercy
so why do we speak of pain and humiliation
both life and death stem from the great world spirit

murphy the old stoic in his calm acceptance

10/4/2010 8:11 AM

li bai v-02

“thoughts of the nobles” a song

the imperial cabinet mountain as well as the zhong nan
swim as blurred colors on the horizon
i lean against a rock and gaze toward chang an
i see a plethora of palaces in and around the forbidden city
the ownership of all these lands defies description
the nine main roads straight taut strings
the clear wei river resembles the milky way
moving across the city as the stars move across the sky
the buildings and nature combine to hold one's interest
i see the splendid brilliance of the robes and caps of the public servants
imperial horses fill the pastures of the surrounding mountains
one remote area inspires awe with its massed weapons of imperial troops

ministers such as yi yin and gao yao hone their organizational skills
generals such as wei qing and he chu bing flaunt their extreme powers
the carillon and singing exert their eternal joy
yet, suddenly the sparkle disappears and the weariness of age brings displeasure
after the moon has filled it begins to shrink away
after the sun reaches its zenith it begins its sink to ground
if one does not wish to waste the imperial gifts as did dong hai shu guang
why should he emulate the setting sun
it is useless to complain as once did the duke of qi on the cattle mountains
the tears of distress moistening his breast

murphy watching the parade go by

10/5/2010 7:57 AM

li bai v-03

in guan dung on the east sea there was a brave woman

the citizens of liang shan was upset by the seizure of the unlucky wife of ji
the walls collapsed because of the wailing clamor of the residents
great rocks and the earth itself were torn apart by the turmoil
all of this the result of stirring up deep feelings of the people
in guan dung on the east sea there was a brave woman
who put to shame the fabled maiden su lai qing
she had learned the art of fencing as well as had the young woman of yue
she was as extraordinary as the miracle of a meteor
she dedicated her life to avenging the honor of the city's men
she was prepared to suffer a thousand deaths without flinching
the dazzling steel sparkled in her hand like brilliant snow
the heavens were aroused by her noble fidelity
she trod the ten steps path in two mighty bounds
she cried out three times and then crossed their arms
she cut off the heads of the enemies and flung them before the city gate
she trampled on their bodies and went on her way
she showed the indignation of a dutiful spouse
a noble sense of justice radiated from her being
li yong, prefect of bei hai
reported the incident to the emperor with dispatch
her actions influenced the morals of the people for the better
her shining example spread throughout the empire
her name was added to the biographies of outstanding women
and the importance of her heroism grew ever larger

shun yu was pardoned from the penalties imposed on him
due to the intercession of his daughter ti ying to the emperor wen di
the daughter of the keeper of the ford sang the helm song
and effected the pardon of her father's severe punishment
ten unloving sons
are not worth as much as one such daughter

yu rang slashed at the empty raiment of the prince of xiang zhao
he had the intention of killing the leader but failed to do so
yao li killed qing ji after he abandoned his wife and children to fool his enemies
for a brave man this was always easy
but what blame did the wife and children bear
why hand them over to death by fire to seek an empty fame
when all these men are compared to the brave woman from guan dung
her brave deed stands isolated in its glory

murphy recounting the deeds of the beloved woman of the Cherokee

10/6/2010 10:21 AM

li bai v-04

the poem of the yellow cloth-grass

the yellow grass cloth-plant grows on the banks of the lo river
yellow flowers crowd each other in opulence
the dense green foliage extends with long tendrils
they stretch upwards of a hundred feet to all sides
the local women gather all the white tendrils
plucking the fibers to weave into fine muslin
they manufacture clothing for all at the end of the world
as they send them to their husbands who live in annam

when the sun sinks to the horizon in the southern lands
they do not carelessly throw away their summer clothes
although they are no longer of use in the passing season
they never forget whose hands were busy in making them

murphy choosing his powwow tee shirt for the birthday party

10/7/2010 8:57 AM

li bai v-05

the poem of the white horse

astride a giant horse with the color of snowy blossoms
the bold rider from wu ling sits on his gold tooled saddle
how fearsome his sharp cutting glittering sword
as the setting sun shines on its beaded sheath
he has served as the breeder of fighting cocks for the emperor
and proudly rides beside his sumptuous carriage with its parasol

his bow slew the tiger in the nan shan mountains
with his bare hands he grabbed the monkeys of dai hang mountain
his wine consumption heightens his appearance and attitude
after three cups he brandishes his precious sword
he kills men with it as if he were mowing grass

he begins his journey accompanied by ji meng
as he leaves the han gu guan pass behind he is filled with fighting spirit
he follows the army to lin tao
where he takes part in a hundred battles glowing with rage
whereupon the huns take to their heels in flight

after his return he becomes cocky after consuming much wine
and will not deign to bow before xiao he and cao can
he is now aggrieved in a shabby hut like that of yuan xian
in the inaccessible jungle where he will spend the rest of his days

murphy dutifully deferring to his betters

10/8/2010 9:40 AM

li bai v-06

phoenix flute, a farewell poem to a young daoist priest

you, the fifteen year old immortal genius, love to play your flute
you learned the songs of the splendiferous phoenix of the kun lun mountains
i heard you first at your breathing exercises where you drank your elixir
now you have been summoned by the emperor to the capital

the capital is very far away, thousands of miles
and as you travel your flute will continuously sound
i am moved to tears at the thought of your red lips leaving
i want to scream out loud as your delicate fingers bring the melody
just this once i wish to spare myself the pain of separation
yet we are here to see each other and share an unbearable parting

sing then a song of the immortals that will reverberate in the dark clouds above
they and the purple mists will be with you as you pass through the han gu guan pass
as you seek the teachings of the dao you must visit hou shi shan mountain in he nan
but do not learn the flute music there from the immortal wang jin zi
for if you meet fou qiu gong you will never be allowed to return

murphy taking his mysteries with a grain of salt

10/9/2010 8:54 AM

li bai v-07

the song of the fair maiden scorned

at fifteen she entered the imperial palace
her rosy cheeks flashed the red splendor of spring
the ruler chose her for her jade-like beauty
she served him in the bedroom behind the golden wind screens
her radiant face as beautiful as the evening moon
when she straightened his robes he was touched by the winds of spring

but had she not heard of zhao fei yan
who had the emperor's favor stolen by another arousing much hatred
deep sorrow can wound a man
black hair become a tangled white shrub

and one morning one's appeal disappears, the world crumbles into nothing
one trades a fur coat trimmed with kingfisher down for wine
one is separated from the dance dresses embroidered with dragons

one has not the heart to sing of such misery
yet for her i have played this song on the pipa
her whose soul is torn as these strings next to breaking
her whose heart is agitated and restless each and every night

murphy losing his athletic prowess at the ripe age of 35

10/10/2010 8:57 AM

li bai v-08

"beyond the border." (1 of 6)

full snow still on the mountaintop
the fifth month and still no flowers
fog rises from the crust of ice
a man sends beauty from his flute
the willow song the bliss of spring
but here there is no change in being

kettle drums call to early battle
roused from deep sleep of night
up in saddle fully armed
draw from sheath quickly now
brandish sword and with one blow
strike down the lou lan prince

murphy field stripping his trusty m 1

10/11/2010 8:27 AM

li bai v-09

"beyond the border." (2 of 6)

the border troops descend into the northern desert
to keep the turkish horses from the available southern waters
our warriors' lances have seen a thousand battles
and think of nothing else than the grace of the emperor

they eat in the sand-sea midst the ice and snow
they rest by the burial mounds after sweeping them clean
for once the power of the tocharians is broken
they will sleep the sleep of peace

murphy listening to the gunny sergeant brag a bit

10/11/2010 8:37 AM

li bai v-10

"beyond the border." (3 of 6)

the chargers gallop as swift as the wind
cracking their whips the riders cross the wei bridge
with drawn bows they leave behind the moon of china
but the enemy arrows will destroy the proud sons of heaven

the ranks of our men dissolve as the stars disappear
dank mist rises above the empty camp on the vast sand sea
a painting "under siege" is now prominent in the unicorn gallery
while the portrait of general he qu bing, neglected, stands alone

murphy content with winning and not being the hero

10/12/2010 8:32 AM

li bai v-11

"beyond the border." (4 of 6)

i see him on a white horse in the border fortress huang jin sai
in my dream he is always under the cloud covered sky of the sand desert
how can i endure this time of sorrow and misery
so far away from him and i still dream of the man in the border fortress

the autumn fireflies crowd through the open window
the moon slowly traverses the sky above this ice-cold harem
the wind rustles the dry leaves of the chestnut tree
teases through the branches of the wild pear tree
i am unhappy he has gone, he will never return
my tears flow, i know, in vain

murphy finishing a romantic novel of world war i

10/12/2010 2:10 PM

li bai v-12

"beyond the border." (5 of 6)

autumn is the time the border people come down from their mountains
we must go out past the great wall to confront them
the tiger is out of the bamboo, the general begins his march
the soldiers of the empire do more than stop in the sands of the gobi

the crescent moon hanging in the air is all one sees in this wild desert
where dew crystallizes on polished armor and the drawn sabers
many days must pass before we can return from our positions
do not sigh, young women, you will be sighing much too long

murphy having made it through boot camp and now in advanced infantry training

10/13/2010 8:25 AM

li bai v-13

"beyond the border." (6 of 6)

the fire beacons glow first in the gobi to send news
their flames flare up and extend to the gan xuan palace
the clouds pick up their glow from below
the emperor takes note and wields his sword
he calls on li guang his field general
to take his troops and send them into battle

their rallying cry roars into the sky
their marching tread shakes the very earth
thus does the dragon bestir itself
to put an end to the fiendish enemy
the warrior spirit, the onslaught of battle
they are once and for all to be swept away

murphy goose-stepping with the best of them

10/14/2010 8:44 AM

li bai v-14

major worries of bygone days

my entire life in bygone days was stark
my hands were turned to finding food, stacking firewood
the road was long, the food gone too soon
my mouth hurt, my lips were burning

today, though, i am just drunk and tired
but my joy is greater than that of a thousand spring times
the immortals took pity on me
and enticed me to visit distant countries
over the ocean we hurried to the three islands of the blessed
over the land we camped on the five great mountains
riding the dragon we flew up into the heavens
and my eye looked on the two horns of the dragon constellation

they gave me the mystical nostrum
a bountiful supply of the elixir of life
i, a short lived cicada, through their grace become an adept

i am deeply ashamed that in my subsequent life
i have not repaid their mercy, i am truly the bird jing wei
who, flying with sticks in his mouth, filled the eastern sea when they fell
the lessons of the dao are heavier than heaven and earth
huang di had guang cheng zi as a teacher
and to him the throne was no more than a cicada wing
weighed against the knowledge of long life
when his officials laughed out loud
it sounded like the buzzing of flies

murphy the old shaman in training

10/15/2010 9:52 AM

li bai v-15

the song “on the border”

the han dynasty pursued a policy against the hun which was not balanced
the huns retaliated and penetrated to the wei bridge outside chang an
in the wu yuan district the grass grows rich and green
how insolent were the horse nomads to graze there

the emperor ordered the generals to wage war against them
to push through the yin shan mountains from east to west
so the yin chi mountains might also be reached by the han
to deprive the women of the hun their red make-up from these mountains

there were many rear guard actions beyond the huang he
for after hostilities began the fighting was bitter
but one thousand miles of inhospitable country was cleansed of the enemy
now the sea of sand in the gobi lies silent and abandoned

murphy reading about the police action in korea

10/16/2010 8:53 AM

li bai v-16

jade steps grievance

standing outside on the steps of jade
a sparkling dew is formed

the night is long, grows colder
gauze silk stockings hold nothing out

going inside she lowers her blinds
lowers slow their water essence

the glittering crystals become jewels
splinters of the autumn moon

murphy trimming the wick on the kerosene lantern

4-13-02 9:40 pm

li bai v-17

four xiang yang songs (1 of 4)

xiang yang in hub eh is a place of joy
everyone sings and dances to the horn pipe
the city lies along a stretch of clear water
where the spring moonlight bewitches people

murphy perfecting his style for the texas two step

10/17/2010 8:57 AM

li bai v-18

four xiang yang songs (2 of 4)

shan jian son of shan tao once when drunk from wine
tumbled on the shore of lake gao yang in xiang yang
rising he felt the white cap on his head was now askew
so he forthwith returned back to his home

murphy tipsy and capable of anything

10/17/2010 9:06 AM

li bai v-19

four xiang yang songs (3 of 4)

the xian mountain towers over the han river
whose water is green with snow white sandy banks
at the top of the mountain stands s memorial tablet
so wet by tears the inscription is blurred by blue green moss

murphy shouldering the casket with three other men in the clan

10/17/2010 9:10 AM

li bai v-20

four xiang yang songs (4 of 4)

drink yourself drunk on the shores of lake gao yang
but do not visit the plaque so wetted by years of tears
shan jian managed to get drunk while mounted on his horse
he was such a sight passing children all laughed out loud

murphy ever the fool in his cups

10/17/2010 9:15 AM

li bai v-21

the song of the great dam

the han river flows past xiang yang
flowers bloom beside the great dam as the sun shines
the meeting spot with my loved one was here at the foot of the dam
tears fill my eyes looking south where she is now

the spring winds bring no feelings of joy to me
instead they tear into my dearest dreams
i cannot conjure up her face in my mind
the wide sky separates us, blurs my inner vision

murphy pining away in pennsylvania without her

10/18/2010 8:46 AM

li bai v-22

eight poems about the pleasures inside the palace (1 of 8)

softly, softly, they emerge from the golden chamber
hush, hush, it is the especial palace of the emperor

mountain flowers bedeck each precious knot of hair
embroidered pygmy bamboo with twining flowers adorn their flowing gowns
they come from within the deepest interior of the palace
walking alongside the imperial carriage

what a pity they must disperse after all the songs and dancing
to be transformed into a colorful cloud of flying away

murphy imagining the strenuous demands of an extensive harem

10/19/2010 10:12 AM

li bai v-23

eight poems about the pleasures inside the palace (2 of 8)

the color of the willow is delicate as yellow gold
the flower of the pear tree fragrant as white snow
in the gem tower nest a pair of kingfishers
in the hall of pearls a loving pair of mandarin ducks

chosen maidens follow the great imperial carriage
singing quietly they enter the bedroom of the emperor
who is the first in the palace
fei yan of zhao yang

murphy watching the beauty pageant from the bleacher seats

10/19/2010 10:35 AM

li bai v-25

eight poems about the pleasures inside the palace (4 of 8)

in the spring sun comes back to the jeweled forest
there are many pleasures to be indulged in the golden palace
even before the morning sun has penetrated the rear hall
the imperial carriage drives up early, long before dawn

laughter rings out, it flounces between the flowers
a young maiden sings by the light of a candle
the hot bright moon lingers in the sky
may the drunken moon goddess never leave

murphy partying when and where he feels like it

10/20/2010 7:55 AM

li bai v-26

eight poems about the pleasures inside the palace (5 of 8)

the fragrant wind comes through the embroidered door curtain
the first morning light is a reddish glow in the flowered window
the palace flowers crowd each other in their reach toward the sun
the pond plants grow rapidly in the advancing spring

one hears bird song from the green woods
dancing figures can be seen on the blue balcony
in zhao yang it is the month of flowering peaches and plums
behind the silk curtain the sounds of love

murphy replete from his early morning dalliance

10/22/2010 10:15 AM

li bai v-27

eight poems about the pleasures inside the palace (6 of 8)

on this day in the ming guang palace
one wishes once again to join the cheerful company
the spring wind infuses the purple room with its heavenly sounds
it flows down from the heights of the pearl tower

the lovely dancers lend their grace and beauty
the singers add a soft harmony to the wind
the moonlit night blossoms with the flower's perfume
the laughter of the palace girls a perfect complement

murphy alone but with dreams of a suitable companion

10/23/2010 9:12 AM

li bai v-28

eight poems about the pleasures inside the palace (7 of 8)

the branches of the plum tree are now free of the cold snow
the spring winds have returned and freshened the pastures
the song of the oriole intoxicates the young women
the bird seems almost drunk twittering back and forth with the swallows

the setting sun flatters the group sitting around the table
the newly opened flowers have assumed their dancing costumes
as evening descends the magnificent imperial guard take up positions
and brilliant lighting is set forth for festivities to come

murphy putting on his glad rags for the soiree

10/24/2010

li bai v-29

eight poems about the pleasures inside the palace (8 of 8)

before the southern xun palace the water is green
up in the northern que tower the flowers are red
the song of the oriole is heard from around the tai pond
the calls of the phoenix come from the yin island

the pendants of the chaste maidens ring out
the beautiful young women play with a silk ball
the weather of early morning is clear and beautiful
one desires to enter in and wander about

murphy always the wallflower looking on

10/24/2010 9:03 AM

li bai v-30

three songs improvised to the qing and ping melodies (1 of 3)

he sees a dress in the clouds and then a face
the spring wind flows over the dew-wet railing
he knows this is not yu chan that he perceives
but the remembered dance of yao dai in the moonlight

murphy prone to visions when he is drinking

10/24/2010 9:24 AM

li bai v-31

three songs improvised to the qing and ping melodies (2 of 3)

the dew-laden branch pours forth the sweet fragrance of its many flowers
the spirits of the clouds and rain do not bring their regret to this place
i ask you what memories flood back for you here now
the seductive fei yan perhaps, but only after she changed her clothes

murphy a sophomore in college deeply in love

10/24/2010 9:33 AM

li bai v-32

three songs improvised to the qing and ping melodies (3 of 3)

the most flamboyant of flowers and the most charming of women
combine to captivate the eye and beguile the senses
if spring flowers come only briefly, why is that so important
when now on the north side of the railing, now comes a gentle fragrance

murphy young and exceedingly susceptible

10/24/2010 9:39 AM

li bai v-33

military music in the imperial palace

as prominent as jin ling rising to face the shores of the sea
as clear as the water surrounding the capital of wu
the sounds of the cymbals lead in the cavalry
the riders slowly accompany the dignitaries

the hammering of the gongs add to the solemn procession
the beating of drums signal the opening of the gates to the double-walled city
the son of heaven watches from his jade platform
the troops march in as clouds of resplendent armor

the sun rises to light the city's thousands of houses
the uniforms glint in the rays of the morning star

after the audience comes the time for baths and leisure
perhaps a stroll by the pavilion of lang feng
then to join the great company beside the two stone gates
to wait joyfully for the welcoming imperial grace

murphy mingling with the nobility in full regalia

10/25/2010 8:57 AM

li bai v-34

the song of nu xiu, a daughter of the qin family

the daughter of the qin family outside the west gate
was as beautiful as the hydrangea flower
yet in her hand she brandished the sword of bai yang
in broad daylight she slew the family's nemesis
the sleeve of her blouse dripped with fresh blood

her heroic cry rose into the purple clouds of heaven
then she immediately fled to the western mountains
but the officials of the border held her back
for even though she was the husband of the king of yan
she was prosecuted for the death
the criminal laws were violated equal to stepping on the tiger's tail
but she was not afraid of the claws and teeth of the tiger

but her white neck was not hacked through
at the place of execution her face was forced deep down into the mud
after she had been exhibited like a golden hen awaiting a pardon
then the death penalty was enforced
she had no need to feel ashamed before the sister of nie zheng
and for all time the two are linked in history

murphy agreeing to avenge his clansman according to the blood law

10/26/2010 9:02 AM

li bai v-35

the young maiden of the qin imperial wardrobe

the son of heaven resides in the wei yang palace
where i served him as a dresser
but i no longer enjoy entry into the private apartments
i dare not now approach the golden bed

i have been as true as feng who protected emperor yuan di from the bear
on insignificant me was once placed the splendor of the sun and the moon
yet now i flit through life adrift as a firefly

oh do not disdain the worth of the turnip and the sorrel
because one does not like the age of their roots

murphy accepting his death as an athlete at the ripe age o 32

10/26/2010 9:18 AM

li bai v-36

the chant of dung wu in gao xian mi

i love the ancient times and laugh at the vulgarity now in vogue
in my youth i listened to examples of the wise and the good
i hoped to be able to serve my sovereign
and after my work was finished to be able to bow deeply and retire

the sun was shining from the high heavens
and benevolently lit my small personage
respectfully i received an imperial vocation
and rose up suddenly from the high weeds
i was summoned to the sublime purple mists near the ruler
and was taken with joy inside the forbidden city

the emperor honored me with a personal carriage
my fame rose high into the clouds
the imperial carriage is accompanied by high dignitaries
and in the wake of the emperor i go east to the golden city of chang an
the imperial horse i ride is more splendid than the fabled “miracle shine”
dressed in brocade i repair to the palace wen quan in the xin feng district

leaning against a rock i lookout on the snow filled pines
sitting in front of copious wine i play the lute
later i imitate the example of yang xiong
and weave an extended poetic description of the wen quan gong palace
an imperial letter is sent out praising my work
my name spreads to the farthest distance
and after my return to xian yang
i engage in many animated conversations with princes and dukes
then suddenly one morning i leave the gates of bronze horses
and wander again like the restless windblown thistledown

all the many glitterati dispersed with time
and now the jade cup remains empty
only the power of my talent remains with me
yet i can support myself still
and need not be ashamed in society

in my leisure i write the chant of dung wu
now the song is over and my heart remains full
with these verses i take leave of my friends
for now i am looking at old huang gong and qi li ji

murphy swapping war stories with the old gunny sergeant

10/27/2010 9:43 AM

li bai v-37

a palace maiden marries in han dan and becomes the wife of a subaltern

i was originally from the upper chambers in cong tai
full of expectation i entered the palace of the ruler
i came with my beautiful face aflame like a flower
how could i ever imagine aging and decay

then after i had left the steps of the jade paace
i disappeared as once did zhao yun

i reminisce in the town of han dan
and think of the autumn nights in the women's quarters
but the ruler does not see me now
and sadness keeps me awake til the dawn

murphy berating himself for taking his youth for granted

10/27/2010 10:00 AM

li bai v-38

song of the exodus of troops through the north gate of ji

in the northern climes lie the camps of the barbarians
there where the light of the pleides shines bright and clear
field reports have arrived with terrible news
the flames of hellish battle flare both day and night

you have received orders to cleanse the border regions
and your chariots now depart thick row upon row
the commander no longer sits quietly in his camp
his heart beats quickly as he grasps his sword

the wheels of the battle wagon of the bold leader now rolling
the flags and banners of the troops advancing to the battlefield
throughout the sandy wastes of the gobi the wild tumult of battle
the clashing sounds of steel and murderous cries rise to the blue heavens

the troops are marched to position below the “red mountain”
there to flank the enemy by the foot of the great wall
in the starry winter cold sweeps a wild sand storm
standards and banner now hang torn to shreds in the winds

then through a moon lit night come the sounds of muffled movements
all the warriors ready now with frost hanging from their armor
one mighty swipe of a hero’s sword downs the lou lan king
the many arrows of the army make short work of those who try to stand

many khans of the desert fiends now gasping for their last few breaths
those remaining run in fear driven to escape their fate
the son of heaven sent you to the winning battle
sound loud the song of victory marching home to xian yang

murphy on the winning side for a change

10/28/2010 11:41 AM

li bai v-39

the way to lo yang

who is the gentleman with the white jade face
who travels in his carriage over the heaven's ford bridge
he has been to see the beautiful blooms along the eastern road
and now makes the people of lo yang stop to let him pass

murphy understanding yet again that position has its privilege

10/28/2010 11:57 AM

li bai v-40

the trek to the north

how agonizing and difficult is the long trek north
when one must climb through the tai hang mountains
steep ravines run along a serpentine climb
the mountain ridge almost touching the blue of the sky

how ceaseless now is your foot stepping on and on, on stones
how often the wheel of the cart touches the mountain wall
finally not far from yu xiao one sees the sand mountains ahead
and their series of watch fires stretching far to the north

the bloodlust of the swords and spears raised high
the fierce north wind tearing at the armored men
up on the yellow river the rebellion rages
the enemy already surrounding lo yang

and on we march, on and on, when will we return
many turn back to look toward home
marching through ice and snow a painful way
the sound of the war horn tearing at the heart

strips of cloth do not protect from the bitter winds
the rough mulberry bark chafes the skin
the water one needs too deep in the gorge to get
no firewood to be scavenged along the narrow road

a disturbed tiger twitches its tail and bares its teeth
they gleam in the mind white as an autumn night's frost
the trees and the shrubs stripped bare of all fruit
thirsty men have to make do with a few drops of dew

suffering and agony companions on this hard march north
as spent as their horses the weary soldiers groan
when will the way for the emperor be clear once again
under a calm peaceful sky, cloudless and pure

murphy limping back from the fifty mile forced march with full pack

10/29/2010 9:07 AM

li bai v-41

the song of brevity

the light of day, how short it seems
and a hundred years soon pass by
the blue sky stretching wide its infinity
thousands of eons and chaos resolves to this world

the two temples of the sylph ma gu
have faded until they are half white
the lord of the heavens has beautiful maidens
always at his side in his careless play

why cannot i take the reins of the dragon carriage of the sun
and take it back to the east and the fu sang die tree
there i would drink much wine under the sign of the northern bushel

wealth and prestige is not what i most wish for
i want nothing more than the setting sun to stop on its way

murphy with too many balls in the air and not enough time to catch them all

10/29/2010 9:32 AM

li bai v-42

the sparrow on the barren wall

the chirping sparrow seems pitiful on the barren wall
how hard for him to eke out a living
actually he looks more like a warbler than not
but he is surely not from the phoenix family

he has four young greenhorns with him
and they will never get enough food
while he pecks at the chaff and bran near you
he must always fear the crows and the hawks

he is reluctant to fly over to the tai hang mountains
and ashamed he must look here for scant specks of spilled rice
while dispensations of heaven are immutable
submission to fate quiets vain longing

murphy grown misty eyed at the face of poverty

10/30/2010 8:55 AM

li bai v-43

the singular bodhisattva

over the forest on the undulating plane rises a veil of mist
the thrust of the cold mountains a heart rending green
the shadows of night reach high to the upper chamber
on the balcony mourns a singular man

he has been kneeling on the jade step for a long time
birds fly back to seek their roost for the night
but where is this man's returning path
which return, long or short, lies before him

murphy the zen adept, laughing

10/30/2010 9:11 AM

li bai v-44

i remember the beautiful girl of qin

while playing the flute i remember the weeping girl of qin
then the vision is gone and i am alone on the moonlit tower
the moonlight on the tower of qin
the color of willow flowers and every year the same

the pain of separation on the bridge in ba ling
at the autumn festival celebrated in lo you yuan palace
now the noise and dust on the old road to xian yang are gone
the noise and the dust are gone

now the west wind blows and the setting sun fades
the last flickering rays reaching the palaces of the han

murphy always a sucker for a sad story

10/30/2010 9:25 AM