

**chinese**

**poetry**

**james r. murphy**  
**2002**

Poems

*i was mountain, i poured rain*

1. answering why in the mountains, li po
2. traveling at night writing my feelings, tu fu
3. thinking of past wanderings, tu mu

*yet more lazy than spring*

4. over the hills there are vines with fruit, book of songs
5. autumn wind song, emperor wu
6. singing feelings, rwan ji
7. lady night song of spring, anonymous
8. climbing the mountain at serpentine island, sye ling-lun
9. seeing off a friend, li po
10. south river spring, tu mu
11. on the wall of north tower after snow, su shr
12. i want to go out but it rains, lu you

*meng hau ran*

13. spring sunrise
14. years evening, return to southern mountains
15. to friends at yang jou, written on the tung lu river

*li po*

16. i love master meng
17. parting at yellow crane tower
18. heng-jyang ferry
19. whiling away time
20. early departure white emperor

*tu fu*

21. spring scene
22. spring night vigil, palace chancellor
23. remembering family in the moonlight
24. delightful spring night rain
25. broken line poem
26. pensive autumn

*cold water of october*

27. army camp in early autumn, marshall yen wu
28. horse poem, li he
29. border post song, wang chang-ling
30. wei city song, li po
31. spring longing, li po
32. ballad of lung-syi, chen tau

*the life we lead is hard*

33. lady night song of autumn, anonymous
34. jade steps grievance, li po
35. he does not come, yau ywe-hwa
36. farewell feast, princess le-chang
37. on hearing a lute, madame meng
38. hearing the lute of a monk of sheu, li po
39. lyrics to "tipsy in the flowers' shade," li ching-jau
40. lyrics to "spring in wu-ling", li ching-jau
41. cave fairy song, su shr
42. traveling palace, ywan jen
43. jan li-ben's daughter, the mad fox poet, sings, gau shr

*evening thins the clouds*

44. inviting young nephew for wine, po chu-I
45. spring journey to west lake, tu mu
46. tied up at the mouth of the chin-hwai, tu mu
47. night mooring at maple bridge, jang ji
48. fragrant mountain temple, wang wei
49. seeing off a brother to the southern islands, chyen chi
50. looking for master chang, lyou chang-ching
51. drinking wine, tau chyen
52. living by the river, lyou dzung-ywan
53. river snow, lyou dzung-ywan
54. stuck on lotus mountain in the snow, lyou chang-ching
55. night rain, po chu-i
56. deer fence, wang wei
57. seeking a recluse, jya dau

answering why in the mountains

ask me why i stay in the evergreen forest  
and i will smile a soundless ease  
up here peach blossoms leave on the water's flow  
up here are no men and heaven near earth

murphy sipping his morning coffee

2-11-02 7:45 pm

Li Bai  
Tang Dynasty  
About 730 AD

2

travelling at night writing my feelings

the long slim grass on shore bends in a light wind  
the tall mast towers above me, alone  
the stars hang low to touch the broad sweep of shore  
the moon jumps through the sky, the mighty river flows  
what name have i made for myself as a poet  
now i'm too old and sick, worthless i must quit my office  
i sit here floating, floating, and to what end  
between all the earth and the sky is but this skittering tern

murphy flushed from playing his guitar

2-11-02 9:32 pm

tu fu  
tang dynasty  
765 AD

3

thinking of past wanderings

li po once wrote a poem about water's temple  
old gnarled trees, high mountains all around  
tall buildings with covered galleries, the wind

almost drunk, almost sober, i wandered there three days  
i was red flowers, white flowers; i was mountain, i poured rain

murphy patting his head while rubbing his belly

2-12-02 12:00 pm

tu mu  
tang dynasty 830 AD

4

over the hills there are vines with fruit

over the hills there are vines with fruit  
the dew is river of water each night  
i see an apple in a tree

how blush of ripeness touches brow  
how lucky is this chance we meet  
i climb to taste her in her tree

over the hills there are vines with fruit  
the dew each night is wet, so wet  
i see an apple in a tree

its ripeness blushes wide on brow  
how lucky is this chance we meet  
i climb to taste her in her tree

murphy settling down to his afternoon guinness

2-12-02 3:00 pm

book of songs  
jou dynasty  
before 500 BC

5

autumn wind song

the cold wind clear blows  
how white the clouds that fly  
the ground is brown with fallen leaves  
how southern is the vee of geese

how pleasing is the orchid flush  
how florid are the old mums  
now i wish someone for me  
someone i'll never forget

how fun it is to cross on ferry  
across the wide fen river  
to make it out to deep midstream  
and crash white waves in cresting

how sharp the song, how deep the drums  
how water sings when oars put forth  
how pleasant is my current state  
though my brow be deep in worry

i'm still young with a young man's heart  
yet how can i escape old age; yes, how

murphy calmly eying the bar's aquarium

2-12-02 3:15pm

emperor wu  
han dynasty about 100 BC



6

singing feelings

at night at home and i can't sleep  
i rise to play my steel guitar  
i peek through curtains to glow of moon  
a breeze blows freshly through my gown  
there a lone goose honks the wild  
birds fly around the northern woods  
and i, left here too, pace my rooms  
with close damp throat, alone and sad

murphy neglecting to answer his telephone

2-12-02 3:25 pm

rwan ji  
wei dynasty about 250 AD

7

lady night song of spring

the woods in spring are bursts of flowers  
but trilling birds speak to me of grief  
the fresh raw wind makes feelings strong  
my thin silk skirt blows up and open

murphy in his houri heaven

2-12-02 3:40 pm

anonymous  
six dynasties period 300-600 AD

8

climbing the mountain at serpentine island

what can you say to the sorrow-filled traveler  
come to see the sea, to feel dawn breeze  
no one has found the end of the waves  
no one has touched deep sea's bottom

then i hear in my mind a song of pleasure  
it makes me smile despite sad feelings  
now i will roam the jasper green sands of these islands  
wander on and on to the peaks of the red dirt mountains

murphy at peace in his special reading chair  
2-16-02 12:05 pm

sye ling-lun  
six dynasties period  
probably 423 AD

9

seeing off a friend

the green mountains stretch across to the north of town  
the white water creek winds under the eastern wall

when he leaves this place, once he's gone  
he will be blown by the wind ten thousand miles

i see in the clouds how far he must go  
i see the setting sun in my friends greeting

i must wave my hand and see him off  
now his horse neighs, neighs he's ready to go

murphy lapsing into his texas drawl

2-14-02 12:15 pm

li po  
tang dynasty  
about 750 AD

10

south river spring

warblers sing along all the roads for a thousand miles  
flowers toss wings of red on their green carpet

the villages are walled under a mountain or next to the river  
wine banners fly high in the full winds of spring

in all these southern dynasties there are these treasures  
four hundred eighty temples with their lands

how many of these high buildings have spring so wet  
to loom through such mist in the middle of rain

murphy sitting by his window and looking at trees

2-16-02 8:15 pm

tu mu

tang dynasty about 830 AD

11

on the wall of north tower after snow

last evening the yellow west sky was aglow in the mist  
but later in the night after a calm with no wind came the storm

i felt only that my bedclothes had been splattered with water  
i did not know the courtyard was heaped up with white grains

in the hour before dawn color came to the curtains of my study  
the half moon was at the eaves blanketed with the cold sound of silence

i tried to sweep the north tower, looked up and saw horse-ears mountain  
everything was snowed under except the two top tips

murphy aching for the warmth of summer

2-16-02 11:00 AM

su shr  
northern sung dynasty  
1074 AD

12

i want to go out but it rains

the ocean wind blows rain  
i'm stymied from my morning walk

all along the road i see  
there is now mud, no longer dust

the flowers hide away, willows droop  
spring dawdles along its way

who knew i would like it like this  
that i'm still yet more lazy than spring

murphy after a solid three minutes of meditation

2-16-02 2:00 pm

lu you  
southern sung dynasty  
about 1200 AD

13

spring sunrise

the cold of spring is good for sleep  
and dawn of sun slips by unnoticed

the nesting birds are now everywhere  
they twitter tweet their happiness

last night came pelting rain and wind  
it stopped my sleep and frightened me

all the flowers holding their heads up high  
how many are now crushed and fallen

murphy watching the olympics on tv

2-16-02 3:15 pm

meng hau-ran  
tang dynasty about 725 AD



14

year's evening  
return to southern mountains

i have decided to quit talking  
sending thoughts to the northern palace  
i shall write no more letters

i have a nice place in the southern mountains  
i can now afford to return to that nest  
no matter it isn't as ornate as i live here

the sovereign i must serve finds me wanting  
the aura of rectitude is not visited here  
i must abandon the thoughts of that road

i have been sick these last few years  
and i remember the kindnesses of friends  
grew ever more seldom as i grew ill

older now i have other thoughts out front  
silver hair spurs my dreams to the real  
i am now old, and ever more old

this last summer is the indian's promise  
to last just enough for this rest of the year  
to smile the few fair days that might now remain

i spend this time within my brooding thoughts  
i dwell on sorrow in the cold of the night  
i have the warmth of covers yet i cannot sleep

the view out my window is growing dark with pines  
though resplendent with a glowing moon  
i wait out night, stare out window, empty

murphy sipping rotgut with the plebes

2-16-02 3:50 pm

meng hau-ran  
tang dynasty  
729 AD

15

to friends at yang jou  
written on the tung lu river

from the mountains at night come sad cries  
the apes are howling out there and the blue water flows  
the wind fluffs the leaves on both sides of the river  
this boat sails alone in the bright night of moon  
i have no fealty for this part of the country  
but i remember that last time here with all of you

i allow both trails of all these my tears  
i send them to join with the winds as they flee  
to the western reach of sea, to all of you far away

murphy sliding on skis with arthritic knees  
2-16-02 4:00 pm

meng hau-ran  
tang dynasty early 730s AD

16

i love master meng

i love the way of life of master meng  
he is famous as a free wind blowing below heaven  
in his youth he abandoned the trappings of office  
now that he has white hair he lives in the clouds among pine trees  
he lies beneath the moon besotted with sagacity  
he loses himself amid fields of flowers and serves no lord  
how can i aspire to the height of his mountain  
down here i can only bow to the whiff of his clear fragrance

murphy rereading his variorum edition of yeats  
2-19-02 10:am

li po  
tang dynasty about 730 AD

17

parting at yellow crane tower

my old friend, meng hau-ran, my master, leaves  
he's off to the east from here at yellow crane tower

the misty rain evaporates to flowers of spring  
he goes down the river to yang-jou

his lonely sail dims to distant shadow  
vanishing in the edge of blue of sky

i can only see that the long river goes on  
flows from here still yet, along to heaven's edge

murphy sustaining the attack as he plays his etude

2-19-02 3:35 pm

li po  
tang dynasty about 750 AD

18

heng-jyang ferry

spirits of the sea are aroused  
evil brings shriek, and wind in swirls

waves beat on heaven's gate  
code magic stone, blow hole in wall

how compare the crashing of these waves  
around hang chow when they niagara crash

these splat like a wave of mountains  
shedding snow; they're here, it comes

murphy walking slow to meet the dawn

2-19-02 8:10 pm

li po  
tang dynasty about 750 ad

19

whiling away time

sitting here drinking all this wine,  
i didn't even notice when it got night

i notice now the flowers  
they've shed upon my clothes

drunk, i rise from torpor, walk  
toward the moon glimmering in water

birds have all gone home to roost  
looking around, i see lonely people

murphy consulting his thesaurus reluctantly

2-24-02 8:15 pm

li po about 750 ad

20

early departure white emperor

at dawn we leave the city of the white emperor  
here we are high, close to clouds pregnant with rain

in only one day we run a thousand miles  
and i return to jyang ling, pardoned and important

in all this way, from both riverbanks  
i hear incessant howling of the gibbons

already now the river has carried my light boat  
between piled up mountains upon mountains

murphy watching his cholesterol as he should

2-19-02 11:35 am

li po  
tang dynasty 757 a.d.

21

spring scene

though the nation is broken apart  
the mountains remain and the rivers still run

the city in spring is deep with grasses  
and the trees have filled with leaves

but in feeling this momentous time  
there are tears which sprinkle the flowers

this wrong feeling intrudes, is resented  
the birds as they twitter shock the heart

for three months now, continually  
the beacon fires have been ablaze

i would give almost anything for a letter from home  
even ten thousand in gold if i had it

my old white head is scratched and snatched  
the hair is wimpy and short, thinner

i go to pin it up with my hat pin  
and i can barely manage to make it stick

murphy stranded in queens without the fare home

2-19-02 11:45 am

tu fu 757 ad



22

spring night vigil  
palace chancellory

i can't see the flowers by the low wall  
the evening has hidden their color

a low whish whush of birds  
returning to their righteous roost

i sit and notice the stars' slow shift  
up there above these ten thousand doorways

the moon is beside god's highest heaven  
its brilliance blanches the walls i touch

i will not lie down and be sleeping on duty  
i must be awake for emperor's song

i must be at one with the wind  
the sound must be for the marriage of heavens

tomorrow at the first ray of sun  
i have this sealed document to present

several times already i whispered to the night  
how goes the clock, how goes the clock

murphy schlepping for everyone else

2-24-02 1:15 pm

tu fu  
tang dynasty 758 ad

23

remembering family in the moon light

the guard drums throb through the night  
no one can travel more, we're lucky we're here

on the borderlands with an autumn moon  
and the only friend heard is a lonely wild goose

the dew of this night glows bright  
white in its crustal iciness

so bright the moon as in my youth  
when it rose above where i was born

i remember all my younger brothers  
they are scattered by these pains

i have no family left to counsel  
no one to ask if they live, or die

i send letters to where they might be  
i know my words still can't reach them

the only thing i might add  
there is no end to the fighting

murphy sipping his cool plum wine

3-18-02 1:35 pm

tu fu  
tang dynasty 759 ad

24

delightful spring night rain

the good rain comes in its good time  
especially spring when all is born  
borne on the wind it soaks through the night  
in a steady wet that comes without sound

the country lanes wander under dark water clouds  
the boats on the river cover their bright fires  
in fresh morning light the puddles are red  
and flowers flourish in old cheng-du

murphy knowing that summer comes next

3-18-02 1:45 pm

tu fu  
tang dynasty about 764 ad

24

broken line poem

river is still yet blue again  
birds in the air flash a bit more white  
mountains once again have turned toward green  
flowers i love will soon catch fire

now i see that yet one more spring  
will again happen, and pass  
when will i ever get to see my old home  
what year will it be when i finally return

murphy having been too long in the front lines

3-18-02 1:50 pm

tu fu  
tang dynasty about 764 ad

25

pensive autumn

the freezing glare of dew  
withers the leaves of the maples

here in witch gorge, below witch mountain  
it is dark, thick air, forlorn

the waters of the river splash around  
waves beating against waves  
they seem to leap toward sky

above the mountains loom black clouds  
that reach down to darken earth

the clumped chrysanthemums open again  
oozing the tears of yesterdays

once moored, my lonely boat holds fast  
tied to the heart like this old garden

we are cold here and need new clothes  
quickly flash our scissors and tape

here we are in white emperor city  
spending evenings softening our new rough silks

murphy sitting quietly as is his wont

3-19-02 12:10 pm

tu fu  
tang dynasty 766 ad

26

army camp in early autumn

it was just last night  
a cold north wind  
blew into china  
blew through her mountain passes

a northern cloud  
lay on the borderland  
as bright harvest moon  
brightened the western mountains

i came to call to arms  
for all our brave young leaders  
to stand and face and kill  
to stand against those animals

we must annihilate them  
let not one get back  
to that northern desert  
let not a single horse return

murphy meandering in his pet swamp

3-6-02 12:20 pm

marshall yen wu  
tang dynasty possibly 764 ad

27

horse poem

i am the great desert  
where the sands flow like dry snow

i gallop beneath yen mountain  
where moon seems to hook the sky

when will gold of the sun  
put reins to guide this head of mine

running swift and sure i glow  
in clear, cool air of autumn

murphy imagining a totem animal

3-19-02 12:00pm

li he  
tang dynasty about 810 ad

29

border post song

we pause, the horse and i, to drink  
river holds cold water of october

wind knifes through my coat  
water chills and fills our guts

bank is broad stretch of level sand  
sun is down but not yet sunk

in growing dark we plod on  
see in the gloaming lights of lin tan

for the past few days we fought the enemy  
battles running along the shadow of the long wall

we all feel our spirits grow in our breasts  
our will to win is high, prevails

this yellow dust here is as it was there  
the not long ago of the blood and the noise

white bones lie scattered, disordered  
among the tumbleweed and squat mesquite

murphy reading the reports of his commanders

3-13-02 4:55 pm

wang chang-ling  
tang dynasty about 750 ad



30

wei city song

it's a typical wei city morning  
the dust knocked down by morning rain

near the local inn all is green  
the nascent green of willows

i ask again, and then once more  
just one cup, empty one cup of wine

when you get out to yang pass  
you'll have no old friends out there

murphy pacing himself for the next ordeal

4-13-02 9:20 pm

li po  
tang dynasty about 740 ad

31

spring longing

when northern grasses shine like emerald beads  
these western mulberries droop full green

thinking if i will ever return to you  
brings toss and turn, gut wrench of thought

i know you don't feel this stirring wind of spring  
how can it from there blow my bed's silk gauze

murphy working slowly up the ladder

3-12-02 8:45 pm

li po  
tang dynasty about 740 ad

32

ballad of lung-syi

we were sworn in as warriors  
to sweep away all enemies  
and not to worry about ourselves

we were five thousand strong  
our uniforms lined with marten fur  
with brocade vests, all ground into frontier dust

pitiable that our bones were resting  
in the sandy banks of the spring river  
that is never fixed but always changes

the only part of us still left  
are in the bedroom dreams  
of those we left behind

murphy disdaining to kill, merely counting coup

3-13-02 3:45 pm

chen tau  
tang dynasty mid 800's

33

lady night song of autumn

she stands by the open window  
the clear skies of autumn glow  
effulgent is the moon

she walks slowly back across the room  
dowses candle with a practiced hand  
slither sound is silk, drops her skirt

there is an inwardness to her smile  
the curtains drawn in the eyes  
from what lies deep, deep within

she lies back and reaches up toward me  
her body's breath is orchid on the wind

murphy saying good night to his lady fair

3-11-02 4:30 pm

anonymous  
six dynasties period 300-600 ad

34

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 po  
tang dynasty about 740 ad

35

he does not come

stars, the sun's tears flung against the void  
inside, the candles held by silver  
empty wine cups, and i stand out here waiting

i open the gate and wander out for a while  
i open the gate and stand again within the pale  
dawn is about to happen and he's not here

the moon falls away behind the mountain  
the stars disappear within the glow  
and he finally doesn't come

the mist blows the willow's leaves  
they billow in soft drumbeats  
and a magpie flies away

murphy about to be four cubed

3-11-02 3:15 pm

yau ywe-hwa  
tang dynasty 600-900 ad

36

farewell feast

how can this day go right  
my fears are too real to be held

my new husband who took me away  
faces the old whom i still love

i want to laugh and break down crying  
both, but i can do nothing

only now do i truly think true  
that the life we lead is hard

murphy inspecting the floor for scratches

3-23-02 3:45 pm

princess le-chang  
late six dynasties period about 590 ad

37

on hearing a lute

jade fingers pluck vermilion strings  
the tone grinding deep then clear  
i know the fingers of the syang river consorts  
the ones who tell how hard life can be

first thunder roars a bluster  
the cold of wind hard strong  
after splatters soft of evening  
a rain that showers long

near one hears a cataract  
from mountain just greening  
far one hears the black crane  
swooping from deep blue sky

night is full and dark, the song ends  
i will not last long in this despair  
the cold of morning to come chills the orchids  
the courtyard moon breathes a frost of air

murphy setting table for the feast

3-23-02 4:40 pm

madame meng, nee swun  
tang dynasty 600-900 ad



38

hearing the lute of a monk of shu

i once heard a monk of shu  
play the lute called green brocade

it was late in the afternoon  
e mei peak glowed in the dusk

when he began to move his hands  
i heard the murmurs of all the pines

from here to there ten thousand valleys  
whispering through the there i was

my roving mind was flowing waters  
that rang with bells of splintering frost

i did not notice when it got dark  
the evening in fall brings an always dark

murphy gettin' jiggy with the beat

3-17-02 9:40 pm

li po  
tang dynasty about 725 ad

39

lyrics to "tipsy in the flowers' shade"

the earth this day is thin with mist  
under clouds lowering and thick  
this sad and endless day

i've buried the incense smells  
the curling wisps crawl out their metal home  
the turtle censor made of gold

the town is filled with people  
harvest moon gathering here again

last night deep in the dark  
the cold frost reached my pillows  
the thin silk curtains of my bed

today grows dim as i sing my wine  
and sit by the eastern fence  
the yellow of dusk and after

there is a secret fragrance  
seeping out through my sleeves

and don't believe for an instant  
this spirit is not melting down

the curtains undulate as do my bones  
this old flower with its withered petals

murphy breaking off his simultaneous translation

3-14-02 7:00 pm

poetess li ching-jau  
southern sung about 1125 ad

40

lyrics to "spring in wu-ling"

the wind has grown still  
late spring air still smells of dust  
and the flowers just now withering  
still make your presence known

this day, this evening  
i tiredly comb my hair

i have your things  
i don't have you  
so all things end

and whatever i say  
will only bring tears  
and i can't stop their flow

there are those who say  
our special place  
on the double creek lake  
is still lovely late in spring

but if my canoe  
were to venture there  
i only fear its lightness  
couldn't carry the load

murphy making his to-do list for tomorrow

3-17-02 9:00 pm

poetess li ching-jau  
southern sung period 1135 ad

41

cave fairy song

white flesh, jade bones  
they both are pure and cool  
no bead of sweat spoils the skin

the wind freshens over the water palace  
its subtle flavor stirs the room  
opens the embroidered curtains

bright sliver of the moon glints  
peeks straight down to her  
this person who cannot sleep

she leans across her pillow  
her hairpin knocked sideways  
the hair at her temples tousled

she gets up slowly and walks  
reaches with her pale white hand

there are no sounds from the courtyards  
no doors opening or closing  
time is felt as the milky way's flow

then a question thought  
how late are we into the night  
it is between eleven and one  
for the jade cord stars dip toward horizon

the moonlight begins to dim  
she counts on her fingers how long  
how long til the west wind comes

how long yet for the flowing of her years  
those that the nights have yet to swallow

murphy freshly bathed and shaved

3-24-02 12:00 pm

su shr  
sung dynasty 1082 ad

42

traveling palace

here i sit in the decayed splendor  
a traveling palace long since abandoned  
it is desolate, it is old

i walk to watch the flowers  
they too are lonely in their glory  
they are intensely red

i notice the white hairs of the women  
those left behind with the dust  
nowhere else to pledge their feet

these women are easy in their gait  
they sigh and sit, tell their tales  
and always about sywan dzung, now gone

murphy throwing his tarp over a tallish shrub

3-17-02 8:13 pm

ywan jen  
tang dynasty about 800 ad

43

jang li-ben's daughter,  
the mad fox poet, sings

her hair is in its full crowned glory  
her broad sleeves dress for the chu palace

alone she paces her courtyard  
seeking the coolness of the night

on the steps she takes her jade hairpin  
rhythmically taps a bamboo tree

her voice rings clear in only one song  
the moon shine is crisp like the frost

murphy staying home from the parade

3-16-02 2:00 pm

gau shr  
tang dynasty about 750 ad

44

inviting young nephew for wine

nephew, i have some fresh new wine  
it has the green ant scum, unfiltered

we have a little fire stove in the corner  
it's one made from the reddish clay

it's getting darker, toward evening  
the sky is pregnant with snow

take time for one small, hot drink  
just one cup with me tonight

murphy watching the warblers passing through to the south

4-13-02 9:30 pm

bai jyu-yi  
t'ang dynasty 817 ad

45

spring journey to west lake

the temple of lonely mountain is north  
the graceful jya pavilion west

i notice the water calms  
then a wet scurry of little cloud feet

the early warblers are here and there  
they squabble for space in the warm trees

the swallows over there are building a nest  
they swoop to peck the spring mud

the disordered flowers confuse my eye  
then slowly make the case for natural

the grass so new it barely covers ground  
not deep enough yet for a horse's hooves

i most admire this eastern side of the lake  
and i can never get here too often

i sit in the fresh green willow's shade  
snug on this bank of white sand

murphy finishing another book of unpublished poetry

4-14-02 1:15pm

du mu  
tang dynasty about 830 ad



46

tied up at the mouth of the chin-hwai

smoke of mist cradles the cold water  
light of moon cradles the sand

this damp night we are moored at chin hwai  
snug and silent near the house of wine

the singing girls are singing "courtyard flower"  
they are oblivious to our nation ruined

it was so when the last emperor of the chen  
hiding from his foes called for song

murphy staring out the window at the wind swept trees

3-10-02 3:20 pm

du mu  
tang dynasty about 830 ad

47

night mooring at maple bridge

moon slips over the mountains  
cawing crow announces night  
chilling frost engulfs the sky

along the river rustle maple leaves  
the fires for all the fish bob way off there  
i watch in sorrow as i drowse

i'm just outside soo chow  
the city walls on the near side  
the temple on cold mountain way off there

time is stiff and still at midnight bell  
the round of sound pealing reaches boat  
the deck on which this traveller frets

murphy worrying a score in the practice of learning it

4-1-02 1:20 pm

jang ji  
tang dynasty about 750 ad

48

fragrant mountain temple

i don't know the way  
to fragrant mountain top

for several miles now  
i've walked in cloudy mist

the path before me is alone  
i have only the old trees for comfort

from deeper into the mountains  
comes clear a ringing bell

then spring sound is swallowed  
by all the towering rocks

a glimmer of sun seems chilled  
by the sullen green of the pines

the evening thins the clouds  
i reach a bend in stream, an empty pool

the settled fullness is accepted  
and water stills the fevered mind

murphy waiting for the barmaid while she is reprimanded

4-01-02 1:45 pm

wang wei  
tang dynasty about 750 ad

49

seeing off a brother to the southern islands

so you came to the middle kingdom  
in your search for belief

the path when it comes  
shapes a floating dream

heaven above your soaring senses  
far away the blue, blue sea

one leaves the world in clicks  
the boat of buddha always light

fish dragons below all else  
listen to chants , sanskrit sound

then love comes to cherish  
point of light burns the eye

ten thousand miles but a step  
when depth of heart is stirred, made bright

murphy answering an old shaman's heart felt question

4-1-02 2:15 pm

chyen chi  
tang dynasty about 750 ad

50

looking for master chang

the whole path up the mountain  
creek, walk, creek, walk

moss covers everything  
many clogs have left their even marks

there comes a break in the trees  
a small island open to the sky

there is a white cloud  
resting above in quiet

the herbs are flower smells  
that block the unused gate

behind a damp of rain still clings  
the pines are dark, dark green

i have followed up the mountain  
and reached pure water's source

the flowers by the water  
have flounced their zen of calm

as i face their blatancy of self  
i can almost forget i talk with words

murphy sitting up late with an old sick cat

4-3-02 1:10 pm

lyou chang-ching  
tang dynasty about 750 ad

51

drinking wine

build your house in the middle of people  
but don't listen to the sound of traffic  
just try to imagine how to do this  
let your heart go to somewhere out of the way  
to pick chrysanthemums in a small garden  
and look up over everything else to mountains  
you can see sun's glorious leaving  
you can see birds fly home to roost  
then you can know that to hear anything  
you want to hear, forget the words

murphy sitting at the kitchen table

10-7-96 1:25 pm

tau chyen  
six dynasties period  
about 400 AD

52

living by the river

i have labored too long in service  
my habit neat, my seal-cord tied

how fortunate to have been banished here  
sent out to the southern tribes

now i walk fields slowly in this neighborhood  
the smallish local farms which cluster here

i'm different in an exact way  
like a traveller from the mountains

the plow of morning cuts the dewy grass  
the oar at night catches rock in stream

meeting noone as i amble freely  
i sing the anthem of the blue south sky

murphy wondering why myth stories have such meanings

4-3-02 1:30 pm

lyou dzung-ywan  
tang dynasty about 805 ad

53

river snow

there is no rustle in these woods  
for many miles they've been still

all the beaten paths show nothing  
wind and storm, but no tracks

there is a small old boat on the river  
reed cloak, bamboo hat, an old man

the snow falls lightly on the water  
alone with the fish out in the cold

murphy thinking in diminished ninths

4-3-02 1:30 pm

lyuo dzung-ywan  
tang dynasty about 810 ad



54

stuck on lotus mountain in the snow

it is the dark of early evening  
dark green of mountain in the distance

the sky is cold and blows  
the hut is thatched and poor

from within the brushwood gate  
a barking dog alerts the world

out from the wind and snow  
someone struggles home this night

murphy rushing fro and to

4-3-02 1:40 pm

lyou chang-ching  
tang dynasty about 750 ad

55

night rain

i hear the first cricket  
tonight he chirps  
there he is again  
now quiet

the lamp is dying  
there it goes down  
there almost gone  
it flares

i look out the window  
i see the dark  
i smell the rain  
it is wet

now i know the sound  
banana leaves  
the rain drips down

murphy recalling a pet cat who died when he was young

4-8-02 2:12 pm

bai jyu-yi  
tang dynasty about 800 ad

56

deer fence

i look up an empty mountain  
there is nobody up there

the only thing i hear  
the people sound behind me

the sun returns its angle  
it looks again into the forest

there the green moss  
the light shines its exact green

murphy watching the erection of a skyscraper

4-13-02 9:15 pm

wang wei  
tang dynasty about 700 ad

57

seeking a recluse

up in the dark of the pines  
i asked the young man where the master was

he's out picking medicine plants  
he's gone, he's not here right now

the only thing he could say was  
he's in these mountains here

probably up in the clouds  
i don't know where he goes

murphy looking out the window on the 25th floor

2-25-02 5:45 pm

jya dau  
tang dynasty about 800 ad