

during the third day of the first month of 765 i return to the shore of the huan-hua-xi river and write the following verses to send to my colleagues in the headquarters at cheng-du-fu

my straw hut stands out in the country hard upon a bamboo grove
along my further hedge the river runs toward cheng-du-fu
my home made wine still tastes raw since it was made last month
the gulls swim in the stream and make their mating sounds of spring

my neighbors visit and cut medicinal herbs from my garden
my little boys are encouraged to look through my books
this old white head does not belong in headquarters
i deeply deplore the loss of freedom in my life when i am there

murphy deciding which way is up, which way down
6/30/2008 8:55 AM

von zach XII,1

i build myself a house

i owned a grove of bamboo which grew by the river
it was cool within it during even the hottest summer days
its shade extended far into the flowing river
its pointed tops reached to the edge of the moving clouds

because i felt there might be demons living in this grove
i did not feel badly when it was thinned and shrubs added here and there
just to the east of this grove was a favorable place for a house
i felt if i built there the view of mountains and stream would sustain me

already i have spent six wonderful years there with the bamboo
now, finally, i have ordered a thousand stalks cut down
now an unusual brilliance of sun lights up my cottage
the rushing of the huan-hua river lies openly before my gaze

i do not wish my refurbished hall to radiate its newly pristine beauty
but now my naive mind will allow me to walk out of my hut with joy
although the grass and reeds for the roof are but newly attached
i feel invigorated and much less ill than i was before

here now i can achieve my rest and ease, i am fulfilled
my sense of well being is returning and i am eating more
now that the hatchets have ceased their noise
i will spend my days in the delightful joys of idleness

murphy having repainted his apartment, and glad the ordeal is over
6/30/2008 9:17 AM

von zach XII,2

respectfully i send this poem to imperial counsellor gao-shi

many years have passed since we were together
then we walked on the shore of the wen river in shan-dong
you have risen quickly within the official ranks
and i had no way that i could follow up that ladder

when before you commanded the troops of qu and shu
you weren't able to show the fullness of your talents
in the literary arts i rate you in the highest rank
higher even than cao-zhi or liu-zheng

now the court has a man who speaks his piece urgently like ji-yin
military leaders in chang-an remember you as a second lian-po
the spring here at the end of the world in si-chuan saddens this old man
and far from chang-an my tears for our parting fall in the floods of the jin river

murphy estranged from his boon companions of eld
6/30/2008 9:36 AM

von zach XII,3

spring in the village on the shore of the stream, five poems (1 of 5)

in all villages farming is the main occupation
everywhere now the rivers are in their spring floods
in my life i have traveled far in this world
the change of seasons makes me reflect on my dwindling years

i have always praised my beloved straw hut in my poetry
and a peach blossom spring is also a trigger for song
but prolonged riots have made a mockery of my being useful
and i still wander aimlessly without purpose

murphy sensing the end of his effectual life draws near
6/30/2008 1:54 PM

von zach XII,4

spring in the village on the shore of the stream, five poems (2 of 5)

i came to the three districts of si-chuan from a great distance
and have spent six useless years within its confines
fortunately i have met a an old friend here, the governor yan-wu
we have shared our love of poetry in the thick woods and springs by my hut

because my health has deteriorated a great deal i neglect my appearance
because of my far walks i have worn holes in my shoes
but i am not hiding behind the hedge round my house
i enjoy exploring the stream and watching the sky to my heart's content

murphy keeping on keeping on
6/30/2008 2:07 PM

von zach XII,5

spring in the village on the shore of the stream, five poems (3 of 5)

around the straw hut i have planted a green profusion of bamboo
and the peaches i introduced show their red blossoms everywhere
the image of the moon in my stone mirror stirs my heart
the winds from the snowy mountains of tibet stimulate my face

i have used my red paintbrush in the service of commissioner yan-wu
i received a silver seal of office as an old man
how could he have known my teeth are now falling out
i am ashamed to have my name stain the list of officials

murphy soaking his bum left knee in a hot bath
6/30/2008 2:16 PM

von zach XII,6

spring in the village on the shore of the stream, five poems (4 of 5)

in spite of my illness i wear the red scarf of office
now i return to my straw hut to rest and walk about the purple moss
i wish to spend the rest of my life behind the gate of my home
at headquarters i am ashamed before my younger, more gifted colleagues

gossamer summer threads hang beside the swallows nests in the sun
light glitters on the waves where the gulls are swimming
my neighbors send me turtles and fish for my dinner
they ask whether they can come around to see me more often

murphy finding the world doesn't wish to let him go away so easily as he might wish
6/30/2008 2:27 PM

von zach XII,7

spring in the village on the shore of the stream, five poems (5 of 5)

wang-can was saddened by the bands of rebels who overran chang-an
in his middle years jia-yi was recalled from exile by han-wen-di
the first climbed his tower and produced a masterpiece
the second finally achieved honor after late vindication

the dwellings of both have been praised in the records of noted men
yet in spite of their high talents they are recorded not as officials but as private men
in my early life when i first studied history i revered their example
now i am again drawn to reflect on their situations with great sympathy

murphy contemplating the closing of the circle of his life
6/30/2008 2:41 PM

von zach XII, 8

at the end of spring

blossoms and catkins become old too quickly
the red flowers and white spikes become a messy tangle
as the days lengthen one hears only birds, no guests
at the end of spring i feel desolate in my poor hut

one hears repeatedly of the uprising in shen-si
why is it that si-chuan is spared this unrest
i cannot return to my old native country
the country here has become a protected encampment

murphy going stir crazy in his cramped apartment
7/1/2008 8:32 AM

von zach XII,9

in the evening i climb the bell tower of the si-an closter, i send a poem to pei-di, tenth of his clan

in the evening i lean on the balustrade of the bell tower
all around i see the tips of the snowy mountains
a priest comes briefly and leaves without speaking, the bell sounds
on the desolate town wall the red reflection of the setting sun gradually dims

smoke hovers above the enclosed market place
in the gloaming it seems to become green and heavy
because of my many illnesses i am distressed
and spend most of my time embittered and alone

for my old friends seeing me is not pleasant
though i know that you think of this old poet with sympathy
and because i long to stroll together with you again
i am distanced from the thousand affairs that life entails

murphy forgetting to turn the stove off in his zeal to get back to the computer
7/1/2008 9:07 AM

von zach XII,10

three shortened stanzas (1 of 3)

i have heard many people in the mountains of si-chuan
advocate spring as a proper time to take a trip by boat
if i summon all the strength left in my life
i might venture to see again the nine arms of the big river

murphy deciding it is time to have an adventure
7/1/2008 9:25 AM

von zach XII,11

three shortened stanzas (2 of 3)

in the mouth of the wen-jiang is my water weir
my straw hut lies there west of the stone obelisk
by boat i often proceed to the temple of liu-bei
there on the shore of the huan-hua river i clean my medicinal herbs

murphy remembering they called the cherokee the river cult
7/1/2008 9:18 AM

von zach XII,12

three shortened stanzas (3 of 3)

it is a mistake to say the arrival of spring is always pleasant
often a wild storm will arrive filled with wind's ferocity
it knocked the flowers down and spread them out onto the waters
it even upset the fishing boat which has sunk beneath the waves

murphy putting his plans on hold because of mother nature's wrath
7/1/2008 9:30 AM

von zach XII,13

the secluded life

as i grow old i tend to withdraw from contact with people
the charms of my hermitage present themselves and i rest carefree
birds hop on the ground among the bamboo roots
turtles swim between the leaves of the water chestnuts

the harvest failed this year and i have no money to buy wine
so i work more dligently every day in my garden
alone in my seclusion i drink water instead of wine and sing
i sing a long drawn out song and, disgruntled, smash my mug

murphy grumbling into his third stein of beer
7/1/2008 8:17 PM

von zach XII,14

at the end of the world

at the end of the world an old man cannot find his way back
when the sun sinks he goes east to the shore of the big stream and cries
in long-you and he-yuan the fields are let go fallow
tartan cavalry and turfan infantry penetrate into si-chuan

river waves rise ever higher, great storms uproot the trees
ones sees vultures lead the way and storks and geese soon follow
nine times i have sent letters to the officials at luo-yang
and they have not clarified my position for the last ten years

murphy baiting his hook for perch to pass the time
7/1/2008 8:28 PM

von zach XII,15

lament for the machilus tree uprooted by the storm

on the shore of the big river by my straw hut stood a machilus tree
old people in the village told me it was two hundred years old
i placed my house here especially because of this tree
in the fifth month i often listened there to the loud buzz of cicadas

but a whirlwind came from the southeast kicking up gigantic waves
the trunk of the old tree was attacked by loud thunder and rain
in the end the roots were torn from the earth, an act of the gods
i dearly loved this old tree with its shady area by the shore

travellers from town sheltered under its branches and its cool shade
strangers were always drawn to the sound of the wind in its leaves
now my breast is awash with my bitter tears of regret
it lies now in the undergrowth like a felled tiger or slain dragon

now i don't know if i can sing songs like i used to
my favorite place for singing my poetry was under its leaves
now my straw hut has lost much of its unique charm
i feel lost and forlorn in my most beloved of places

murphy snuffle deep in water when the tornado came whipping over the crest of grady's hill
7/2/2008 8:28 AM

von zach XII,16

joy at the rain

the spring has been dry, the heat oppressive
the light of the sun has been red like blood
the work in the fields has virtually stopped
and the clink of weapons is now often heard

the people of si-chuan have been hard pressed by the troops
and the usually fertile ground could not be worked because of the dryness
then suddenly last night rain came to the land around the big river
and the dry punishment of the sky was at once washed away

indeed the roots of the paddies are now awake to new life
though the smoke of the riots has not completely dissipated
would that the peaceful quiet of old should come again
and i could lose the agony of my anxious thoughts

dense masses of cloud surround the mountain tops
they show no sign of leaving the surrounding area
if only the thunder god could be controlled by me
and the rains could not only fertilize the land but end the rioting

murphy keeping water in the ice box to slake his summer thirst
7/2/2008 8:49 AM

von zach XII, 17

the song: "have no doubts about me"

although a full man i have achieved little in this life
and my head has already turned white in its ineptitude
my teeth have now almost all fallen out
everything about me is most unfortunate

i remember though when i handed in my three poetic descriptions
it was at a big state ceremony with the emperor at the palace
i was surprised at myself suddenly basking in fame
suddenly overnight i had become immensely famous

at that time i would be called to the hall of the secretarial division
and there the officials would stand in rows to watch me wield my brush
in those days my poetry could stir even the emperor
but now i live in poverty and am often hungry

and i shiver with fever through most of my days
yet in my old age i have managed to make a few young friends
there in the headquarters of the governor yan-wu
now from a distance i send greetings and say farewell to all of you

i do not wish to be a clerk seeking the friendship of youth
when i know you would inevitably snicker at me behind my back
i have no reason to try to be better than any of you
so i send you this song, "have no doubts about me"

murphy renouncing all thoughts of becoming published
7/2/2008 9:12 AM

von zach XII,18

the song "high in the sky"

the peacock knew nothing of the horns of the bull
but as he drank from a cool spring he felt their disagreeable touch
you too can indulge the winds on the heights of the kun-lun mountains
but you must watch out for the unknown horns of danger

by the river the pelicans shoo away the flitting swallows
believing mistakenly they wish to steal away their fish
and the swallow drops the mud in its beak in fear
and flies back ashamed to the safety of the nest in the eaves

han-xuan-di when he was still only a prince
was gored by the pressures of the people of shen-si
bao-qian was slandered by sheng-meng-zi
and eventually lost both his legs by amputation

old men must take seriously any mockery
but especially that of younger people
in the works of zhu-ge-liang one may find
that the value of assuaging is emphasized

any competent man strives for fame
and wishes it to last for a millennium
yet any who does not take heed of small differences
will be brought down and not become a great man

murphy carefully reading the yearly evaluation of his ogre of a boss
7/2/2008 10:51 AM

von zach XII,19

i want to leave si-chuan

for five years i have wandered in the west of si-chuan
i have even spent one year in the eastern district of zi-zhou
and now i have a yearning to go where all passports are forbidden
to visit the region beyond the passes to the xia and xiang rivers

this eternal fighting has further whitened my hair
for the rest of my days i wish a quiet home like that of a white gull
achieving peace in this world falls on the shoulders of the first minister
why must i who does not serve him feel so involved that i am brought to tears

murphy dreaming of a hermitage in the woods for the rest of his days
7/2/2008 11:09 AM

von zach XII,20

i spend the night at the rest station at qing-xi, and remember with reverence my old friend
ministerial secretry zhang-zhi-xu, fifteenth of his clan

my boat floats on the big river in the midst of many mountains
at sundown i find anchor on a deserted, desolate shore
my entire life has been one uninterrupted wandering
i wonder where have i ended up this time around

at the foot of the rocks there is a woods of green plane trees
birds and monkeys can be seen frolicking within
i stand there in the bright moonlight in silence
i am afraid of tigers and seek not to call attention to myself

in the middle of the night i think of my old friend zhang-zhi-xu
because of the rioting i haven't visited him for a long time
our separation now has gone on far too long
perhaps i will be able to see him when i visit jing-chu

murphy sleepless running over in his mind odd things needing being done
7/2/2008 4:34 PM

von zach XII,21

a song for my crazy older brother

my brother is merely only one year older than i
yet he sticks to the dao while i am merely simple minded
he considers wealth and respect mere passing clouds
while i desire fame and strive to gain power

in chang-an one autumn it rained for ten straight days
the deep mud made the streets impassable
yet i and my colleagues rode on horseback one morning
it was early at the first cockcrow we passed the palaces of the dignitaries

the red gate was not yet opened
so we waited there shoulder to shoulder

meanwhile my older brother stretched his limbs on first waking
he walked out into the morning sun barefoot without a head scarf
his boy shouted and his girl cried because he ignored them
he only cared to cover his body with rough silk, and where to find food

this year he wished to see me and invited me to visit him at jia-zhou
he promised strong wine and blossoms filling the entire house
there on his first floor we ate and drank, below the house proper
we regaled ourselves with both long and short songs

my brother follows the rule of eight parties in four seasons
his girl did a polite greeting for my wife, the boy the same for me
yet he still wears no headscarf nor any belt, and never washes his head or feet
my older brother is much like chao-fu and xu-you

he has always pursued truth with a joyful rage
and when the sun sets he cradles his head
and never has less than a deep, healthy sleep
i sing these verses for him, but he hears me not

murphy checking up on the clan as an old man visiting texas
7/3/2008 9:53 AM

von zach XII,22

the joy of rain

in the southern empire of si-chuan there has been a long drought
today, finally, clouds reach the big river and promise much rain
the air above is dark and humid, unbroken in its pregnant cover
finally a heavy rain begins throughout the breadth of the land

the nest swallows have all flown to the higher regions above the clouds
there in their colorful plumage they breed among the sharp crags
since evening the rush of rain has not slowed nor stopped
it will be the background thrum for a full night's sleep

murphy in awe of the fickleness of nature
7/3/2008 10:06 AM

von zach XII,23

i feast at the party on the east tower of the imperial governor man from rong-zhou

the marvelous scenery in the midst of this revelry surprises this old man
raises my spirits in an unusual way and leads to inspiration
i sit with the dignitaries close to the singing girls
the host and i are pleased with the quality of the pleasures provided

he commands the deep-green spring wine to be poured liberally
he tells the serving girls to peel the light-red li-chis
yet even here on the high balcony my sad thoughts again intrude
for the women have begun to play sadly on their flutes

murphy deep in the slough of despond
7/3/2008 10:24 AM

von zach XII,24

in yu-zhou i wait in vain for censor yan to arrive. i wish to travel through the yang-zi gorge to
the east

because i have heard that you have left the town of cheng-du-fu
i have been waiting for you here on the sandy shore of the big river
who would have thought that we would not meet here
we are like the clouds and rain who have been separated

i have been singing both slow and quick verses here in the land of wu
the river is deep from here to the fortress at bo-di-zheng
if my boat reaches the tower yi-zhu-guan in hu-beh
i shall wait for you there so we can share the view together

murphy waiting impatiently for his dinner guest
7/3/2008 10:35 AM

von zach XII,25

i throw off my gloom

i have heard people say that the wine made from yu-nan rice
makes a person drunk when only one glass is imbibed
mounting a boat and getting drunk
these are no problem when in yu-nan

now i wish to go down through the gorges of the yang-zi
how many mugs of wine will i need to throw off my gloom
i have already procured rowers and a coxwain
i stand ready now to proceed on my way

the old polemen and the steerers know their stuff
we are beginning to make good progress
i have already set aside the money for their pay
soon i will be able to raise the wonderful wine of yu-nan to my lips

murphy haggling with the wine-merchant for a case of his best sake'
7/4/2008 7:45 AM

von zach XII,26

i hear that the imperial counselor gao-shi has died

i have seen gao-shi no longer since he last returned to court
now suddenly comes the news that an old commissioner from si-chuan has died
without being able to fully utilize his talents he spent his time in the palace
one is reminded of yan-hui and bu-shang who preceded him

he admonished the emperor as did zhu-yun who broke the red banister in the audience hall
my grief over his passing will have no end as long as white clouds appear in the sky
his excellent worth as a poet will also echo far into the future
the fact that he will seal no more poems deeply saddens his old friends

murphy once again perusing the obits in the harvard magazine
7/4/2008 7:59 AM

von zach XII,27

i enjoy a banquet in the home of my nephew, the governor of zhong-zhou

my nephew has become the governor of zhong-zhou
today he gives a banquet in this foreign land
as once did ruan-ji one must visit the hall of one's nephew
i rest in zhong-zhou because of the dangers of my passage to kui-zhou

the festival music inspires me and i sing a long drawn out sad song
i drink a lot and gradually lose my feelings of despond
once in the old country i danced with the scepter as did wang-rong
now i am content to watch other's dance in their joy

murphy contemplating the ultimate use of a cane for his bum left knee
7/4/2008 8:12 AM

von zach XII,28

the temple of da-yu

the temple of da-yu lies in the midst of desolate mountains
i arrive late with low rays from the setting sun, in a chill autumn wind
in the courtyard trees hang oranges and pomelos
on the old hoists on the walls serpents and dragons are painted

above are clouds which move about the bald rock outcroppings
a small stream rushes past a white sandy shore
i have always heard of the famous da-yu and his marvelous works
the man who engineered the waterways to fashion the three regions of ba

murphy disappointed at the small size of the alamo
7/4/2008 9:15 AM

von zach XII,29

i write these verses on the wall of my hermitage in the long-xing cloister

zhong-zhou lies halfway within the three yang-zi gorges
different towns and villages are high in the rocks within the clouds
in the small marketplace there is always a shortage of rice
the stalls close early from fear of robbers, and they close the city gates

the inhabitants show no compassion for the weary traveller
do not look for hospitality from such as these people
i am here in the cloister during my wanderings
i fear the tigers around and will rest here a while

murphy finding shelter from feral nature
7/4/2008 9:28 AM

von zach XII,30

i weep as the coffin of minister yan-wu is taken back to chang-an

the coffin in its white wrappings proceeds on its trip downstream
the specially prepared boat returns to the old capital at chang-an
yan-wu's old mother still lives in good health as before
but his army has changed since his death and come into diasarray

the wind fills the sails of the boat carrying the coffin with the carved dragons
as the distance between it and his former headquarters at cheng-du-fu grows
for an entire day i wept beside the body until evening fell on the yang-zi gorges
now after he has finally left me i recognize his true worth as my friend

murphy bereft and alone at news of his mother's death
7/5/2008 8:10 AM

von zach XII,31

i proceed on the boat trip

on the trip downstream the sails are furled and the waves become choppy
as we reach the rapids i roll up the curtains of my cabin to see the scenery
the marketplaces on the shore lie in deep shadows
the mountain clouds scud by as they bring their seasonal cold

the thick woods offer no paths to penetrate within
the isolated birds seem surprised to see any people
already we land under the poor tower of a town for the night
once again we are in the light of evening having passed the shadowy gorge

murphy always surprised at the richness of simple pleasures
7/5/2008 8:21 AM

von zach XII,32

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

von zach XII,33

i remember a dead friend

the official of the imperial academy su-yuan-ming is now buried
among all my friends he stood next to me, by my side
why was it we had to be separated by the war and its riots
why are we now to be finally separated by death

a look in the bright mirror shows i have aged a great deal
as soon as my grief wells up i look to see a white cloud of friendship
since i have lost you and your expertise as a poet
i have no comparable intellect to discuss poetry with

murphy drinking single malt irish whiskey at the "dead poet" bar
7/5/2008 8:34 AM

von zach XII,34

the song of my straw hut's roof destroyed by the autumn wind

in late autumn of the eighth month came a mad, howling wind
three layers of my thatched roof were rolled up and destroyed
the thatch was thrown into the stream and scattered about the village
even the surrounding trees caught much of it in their branches

the muddy gulches caught more than their share
the children of the village laughed at my old age and feebleness
as they rushed to steal what had been strewn about
openly they bundled up the straw and disappeared into the bamboo

i shout and protest until my lips become dry but all in vain
i return to my bereft hut, lean on my cane, and sigh to myself
suddenly the wind dies down as the clouds darken to the black of ink
they become even more a murky mess in the autumn skies

i seek my blanket which is old and worn, full of holes, cold as iron
my spoiled child has torn it earlier with his feet in his worried sleep
everywhere the roof lets in the cold rain, nothing is left dry
the rain continues and covers the ground in streams

since the riots of the war i have had trouble sleeping
and now i wonder how to survive until the light of morning
i wish it were possible to build a mansion of many rooms
to offer shelter to poor scholars and make them happy

such a house would not be damaged by the storms
and would be as lasting and solid as a mountain
oh, of only that house would appear before my eyes
i could stand the destruction of this house, and die contented in this cold

murphy as a child living in a tent, wet, bedraggled, and cold
7/5/2008 8:55 AM

von zach XII,35

the moon on the fifteenth night of the eighth month, two poems (1 of 2)

my eyes are filled with the bright mirror of the moon
my heart is overcome with feelings for my return to the homeland
thistledown blown by the wind, i have gone far enough away
but it is as difficult to get to chang-an as it is to touch the surface of the moon

the moon's reflection on the water is as white as snow
one can even see individual feather's on birds roosting in the trees
if one were to study the rabbit who resides on the moon
one could even see the individual fine hairs in his fur

murphy alive at harvest time once again
7/5/2008 9:16 AM

von zach XII,36

the moon on the fifteenth night of the eighth month, two poems (2 of 2)

the moon sinks a little more over the wu-shan gorge
its rays still shining on the tower at bo-di-cheng
with its sinking the steep banks of the river darken first
as the last rays light up the upper floors of the fort

the drum signals of the guards seems to hurry the arrival of morning
the lunar toad seems afraid of the noise and now hurries his disappearance
the soldiers stretch awake at the last rays of the sinking moon
as do undoubtedly the soldiers in the camp of the enemies

murphy never forgetting the carnage in iraq
7/5/2008 9:26 AM

von zach XII,37

on the ninth day of the ninth month i attend a banquet given in yun-an by cheng, 18th of his clan,

the last of the frail fall flowers have withered away
only the chrysanthemums fill the branches now
i grow old while the yearly blooms are always fresh
in my sadness the smell of wine and chrysanthemums are my companions

here on this far border we wear dining clothes for the first time this year
we have come to feast on a high vantage point once again
but now all the lands of the empire are torn apart by rioting
and while i drink and sing i pour streams with my tears

murphy marveling at the human capacity for revelry midst the darkest of times
7/5/2008 9:39 AM

von zach XII,38

rain

the roiling clouds grow thicker and higher
finally the drenching rains come down
the water rushes between the rocks in the stream
trickles through the spruce trees to sprinkle their roots

as a result of the drought the autumn has still been warm
and the harvest in the fields has already been given up as lost
but now the blessing of the skies comes with this rain
even the dried up plants will now stir to life

unfortunately, first there came a too violent rain
but now it has settled into a leisurely soaking
yet even now there is an occasional thunder
which refreshes the force of the downpour

this gift has now lasted until the middle of the night
i wish it to be spread far and wide to all the land
in my imagination i see before the frost comes to kill
a great harvest in my garden to be had in the ninth month

and not only for me but for my fellow villagers
i wish my vegetables to become ever more green
i am always angry that i have to hire others to irrigate my garden
now with this rain i can save this unneeded cost

murphy the old farmer worried about his crops
7/5/2008 9:55 AM

von zach XII,39

the big river (1 of 2)

all the bodies of water unite at fou-zhou and wan-zhou
ju-tang is said to be the gateway to the three gorges
there the big river runs toward the far off sea
and people ride it to the imperial court despite robbers on the way

isolated rocks lurk covertly in the gorges and appear only in autumn
monkeys hang down from the long tree branches to drink the water
my heart yearns for the home country which lies down the river
why is its anguish always flowing steadily as does the great stream

murphy running trot lines with his father in the middle of the night
7/5/2008 10:08 AM

von zach XII,40

the big river (2 of 2)

the mass of water pours forth continually
it knows it will eventually feed the eastern sea
the depth of this desire to maintain its course
reminds of the loyalty the lords feel for the emperor

the rivers xiao and xiang meet to achieve the proper width
shooting past the gorge at yan-yu-zui brings the proper roar
i would like to follow the stream immediately
but without the fog and rain which will wet my clothes

murphy thinking the long thoughts that the river brings
7/8/2008 8:15 AM

von zach XII,41

respectfully i receive a personally written letter from the prince of wan-zhong

your lands exceed all but a few in this world
your uncle the emperor holds you in the highest esteem
in your office as governor you visit si-chuan
and now your official car returns with you to chang-an

your ship has already overcome the dangers of the three gorges
in a quiet run the big river hastens toward the sea
the governor of gui-zhou has made you his honored guest
and you have spent the time of hot summer in his famous park

you have sent me several letters as you journey
it feels as if i were at the festivities you enjoyed
now the autumn skies begin to fill with clouds
and the bamboo stir in the wind beside your wayside inn

you already enjoy the long evenings of autumn there
why should you hurry to be on the choppy waves before you
when you reach chang-an you should wait til there is snow on your roof
before you enter the inner palace to report to the emperor

i am like mei-sheng who grew old pursuing his literary efforts
you are absorbed in the rites and their music like once the prince of he-jian
now you are in gui-zhou where once song-yu chanted his autumn lament
while i have lost the way to chang-an here in my peach-blossom spring

we are both held back on the shores of the big river
one in the east, one in the west, at the feet of different mountains
continually hearing the barbarian language muddles my heart
in the evening i feel i am surrounded by ghosts

your loyalty to the emperor is known as that of a trustworthy vassal
you have no need to worry about scurrilous, slanderous attacks
after you have handed over your reports in your worthy way
you will once again take part in the imperial banquets as an honored guest

murphy sipping sherry with the nabobs at harvard
7/8/2008 8:24 AM

von zach XII,42

the rubstone for ink of the censor ping

censor ping is a prince of poets in the present world
 i stand in admiration of his gifted songs
 the emperor has bade him come to the land of the three gorges
 while there he has come into possession of a beautiful rubstone

it was a big block left over from the stone blasting at da-yu
 and he alone saw the uniqueness of this stone
 its smoothness has the form of gentle waves
 and its luster glints forth as flashes in a thunderstorm

two deepening pools of black ink are easily formed
 and the stone has both very wet and more dry areas
 different people can use the pools of ink together
 up to ten persons can sit opposite the stone at the same time

i liken this stone to the unicorn on the official cap of censor
 the special quality of the stone does not take second place to that cap
 when he wishes to pen his noteworthy verses he uses this stone
 and he and his guests can share it during verse time at parties

because he captures with his brush the highest quality of poems
 he will never be far away from the emperor's palace
 if he were to bring this inkstone to the court in chang-an
 i am sure the emperor himself will soon be using it

murphy showing his favorite carved turtle to his guests at the party
 7/8/2008 9:04 AM

von zach XII,43

three poems, each of three rhymes (1 of 3)

when training a noble horse do not strike him in the face
when handling a big fish take care not to injure his scales
if you offend the horse his fur grows dull
if you injure the fish remember he has a mind which can take revenge

when looking upon an excellent man in this world
take notice he does not wish to be slighted by anyone

murphy cross-stitching a biblical verse
7/8/2008 9:14 AM

von zach XII,44

three poems, each of three rhymes (2 of 3)

a large ocean-going ship of many tons
reminds of a white rainbow in the middle of the heavens
as its mast is raised an oxen must be sacrificed
the entire crew must help in raising its sails

yet if the sky sends no wind to stir it to motion
the ship cannot reach its element of the deep waters

murphy spouting aphorisms in his dotage
7/8/2008 9:21 AM

von zach XII,45

three poems, each of three rhymes (3 of 3)

a true patriot finds it difficult to change his policies
a subordinate man finds it natural to toady to power
if the latter wishes to attain fame and profit
he must risk his life on the good will of the powerful

when will officialdom finally be pure and without intrigue
the subordinates are now still laughing up their sleeves

murphy with too rakish a youth to make it in american politics
7/8/2008 9:29 AM

von zach XII,46

the generals, five poems (1 of 5)

the emperor's tombs from the han dynasty lie next to the zhong-nan mountains
the hu who once before robbed these graves have again burst through tung-guan pass
once marvelous jewelry was buried with the storied emperors
and very soon now one will see men wearing them again

our exhausted horses have been thrown against the enemy
the red flags of the turfan which attacked us before now fly over chang-an
how many competent men have we left in the land of the rivers jing and wei
the enemy's generals cannot yet rest while they remain there

murphy chattering from the dugout
7/9/2008 8:54 AM

von zach XII,47

the generals, five poems (2 of 5)

the original idea of zhang-ren-yuan was to build three forts in he-bei
there he felt he could stop the uighurs from seizing the chinese flags
who would have thought he would call in the tatar calvalry as support
when they should have been used against an-lu-shan in the north

then when the once proud mercenary tatars fell, the pass was open
at that moment tang-tai-zong rose in jin like a tiger with his generals
now it is only the emperor dai-zong who stands alone for all of china
how can his generals assume that they have already properly served his majesty

murphy reading between the lines of the reports from the front
7/9/2008 9:08 AM

von zach XII,48

the generals, five poems (3 of 5)

the palaces of lo-yang were burned by an-lu-shan
so one should not boast of the 102 forts in shen-si
shan-dung by the sea is still in the grasp of the rebels
how could one believe that he-bei still belongs to the heir of emperor yao

who of the high dignitaries of the court will recapture these lands
the soldiers of the empire can no longer provide for themselves
yet i am glad that at least general wang governs the borderland
though the war should be put on hold while spring planting is done

murphy receiving the damage report after the battle
7/10/2008 8:05 AM

von zach XII,49

the generals, five poems (4 of 5)

i gaze far to the south to the bronze border columns put there by ma-yuan
even there the dark clouds of war have not completely dissipated
there has been no news of the expected tribute of kingfisher feathers
and the long awaited pearls from the south seas have long been missing

the eunuchs who serve the emperor have become ministers of war
while the generals wear the sable fur caps of emasculated chamberlains
the hot southern lands and the snowy north are still held in rebel hands
one would expect worthy patriots and not the eunuchs to help at this critical time

murphy listening to the sport's announcer question the masculinity of the home team
7/10/2008 8:21 AM

von zach XII,50

the generals, five poems (5 of 5)

always before when i walked the shores of the jin river i saw only the beauty of spring
now the chill autumn rules in the gorges of wu and all the valleys shed their tears
i have remembered especially the late minister yan-wu in the last few days
together with me he received the imperial commissioner to cheng-du-fu

as a result of the imperial mercy he was appointed governor of si-chuan three times
because his army was kept in advanced readiness he often found time to drink wine with me
the west of si-chuan is a natural forteress effectively guarding china proper
now there is an especial need for the competence yan-wu demonstrated

murphy ruing the fallen leaders when they are sorely needed
7/10/2008 8:30 AM

von zach XII,51

i hear the coffin of the late minister fang-guan from lang-zhou is broken open, and being brought to lo-yang for final burial (1 of 2)

i hear the corpse of fang-guan it is to be brought back to the homeland
it is to be buried on the lu-hun mountain near lo-yang
after he had helped emperor su-zong with his innate abilities
his lonesome soul found itself far away from home

he can be compared with zhu-ge-liang as a model of deportment
and like xie-yin he achieved his highest rank only after his death
once i shed copius tears over his grave in lang-zhou
now i weep afresh here in kui-zhou on the shores of the zhu river

murphy standing at the crypt of martin luther king the day after his funeral
7/11/2008 9:00 AM

von zach XII,52

i hear the coffin of the late minister fang-guan from lang-zhou is broken open, and being brought to lo-yang for final burial (2 of 2)

during the day i saw red flags fluttering on a passing ship
i heard it carried fang-guan's coffin broken open in lang-zhou
and it is unfortunate that in the end the rioting still continues
while his body is brought to the home country by way of the hu river

his sword accompanies his coffin along with his books
they will be placed in his house in his homeland
i know the place on lu-hun mountain where he will rest
there the deepest grief will rule while i am stuck here far, far away

murphy remembering his father said he must leave his family to serve the outer world
7/11/2008 9:14 AM

von zach XII,53

i take leave of the scholar chang who is appointed to the royal court

although my son supports me i still need the cane to walk
i have been abed with illness all through the autumn
i washed my hair again only a short time ago
now my winter clothes hang loosely from my body

i afflict my old friend with this pitiable sight
he cannot hold by the tears as he greets me
we are both like waterchestnuts aswirl on the stream
parting, i hope he will write to me in the future in full detail

murphy aghast at his diagnosis of prostate cancer
7/11/2008 9:21 AM

von zach XII,54

recently i heard...

recently i heard the turfan had fled back to the distant areas
they dare no more to graze their horses at lin-tao
the bright sun has returned to the big bend of the wei river
autumn clouds float high over the inhospitable long mountains

there is no more unrest on kong-tong mountain or in wu-yuan-jun
from bei-ting in the center of enemy lands envoys are sent out to chang-an
i hear the turfan king has accepted an imperial princess as his bride
and in the end friendly connections with relations by marriage can not be given up

murphy keeping friendly with his three living ex-wives
7/11/2008 9:38 AM

von zach XII,55

i express grief over the invasion of the turfan and uighurs under bu-gu-huai-en

i hear people say that the uighurs still want to negotiate a monetary settlement
they are not yet ready to retire peacefully to their own country
since the capital has been recaptured and the immediate pressure is off
who would wish to lead an expedition to finish off the uighurs

bees and scorpions even though they are small still have their poisoned stings
our emperor must show his thunder and broadcast his prestige
let us not besmirch with blood the flowing robes of an official like li-chin
by resorting to the bullwhip when dealing with the uighurs

murphy demanding his cake and eating it too
7/11/2008 3:42 PM

von zach XII,56

zheng, official of the crown prince's household, returns to kui-zhou from his exile in shi-zhou

at first i greatly regretted zheng, this blossom from he-han
who came here to gui-zhou at the height of the summer heat
a famous man is careful where he goes and where he remains
he does not think it wise to wander far and wide

yet he must remain here in this distant area with its foreign ways
he must be hard pressed by continual poverty and no prospects
for a time he went to visit governor pei-mian of shi-zhou
their temperaments harmonized and they became inseparable

on his trip there he clung to hanging tree roots to clamber up
he mounted the craggy rocks to touch the blue of the skies
he looked down there upon a world of green mountains along a stream
when finally he reached the town of shi-zhou he released the strain of his trip

i read with close interest his accounts of the journey
my heart was uplifted and i was excited in my joy
i have heard that the customs of shi-zhou are uncommonly primitive
the people treat the host and the guest with equal warmth and hospitality

he met a man there in the official offices of pei-mian
his warmth of welcome reminded him of that of earlier times
he gave the orders to the kitchen to cook twice the amount
when at the banquets there was no end of full mugs and bowls

although at that time the riots were at their worst and unsuitable
the governor honored the dignity of his guest with the finest banquets
the happy gatherings lasted for hours up until midnight
though the host and guest were not even remotely acquainted

pei-mian owns a library of at least 10,000 scrolls
he reads and increases his knowledge during his hours of leisure
i have received many letters from the governor
and i profess to see spears and lances in his powerful calligraphy

now that zheng has returned from shi-zhou i am happy
i would like very much to hear from him about his travels
i have heard before only about the land and climate there
and something of their sophisticated agriculture

one might compare the governor pei-mian to kou-xun of han times
all other districts would strive to have such a governor
as soon as the north wind has relieved the humid miasma
even as an old man i would like to undertake an excursion to shi-zhou

though if i travel along the shore cold reeds will touch me
on the narrow mountain roads i will have to push through thick ivy
indeed i am so weak i always rest on my son or servant
but the thought of making this trip brings a sudden strength

yet i must wait until the first winter month before i leave
i must eat more and become strong for the trip through the rocky wilderness
unfortunately my slow spindly mare cannot be used for travel
when she perspires her sweat is not the red of the strongest steeds

even were i to equip her with a saddle and reins
it would be useless to think about riding her
however, fortunately, i own a sedan chair
and it might be carried lightly to reach shi-zhou

i will proceed slowly through the high regions
and would hope to avoid all possible dangers

murphy with eyes too big for his stomach
7/11/2008 6:06 PM

von zach XII,57

i send this poem to governor pei-mian of shi-zhou

governor pei-mian of shi-zhou is a virtuous man
worthy of consultation in the forefather temple of the dynasty
i met him earlier in my life and thought him then to be incomparable
he is like a golden bell or large gong set in the east wing of the forefather temple

he is like a jade vase, or a telescope in clear autumn weather
since i consulted him in si-chuan my different illnesses have improved
now he has lived here away from his homeland for three years
he has greatly reduced my grief about this life on the border

he is like the four ministers of emperor yao in his great understanding of state affairs
he makes easier the worries of the emperor like the best officials of the han dynasty
how often he has sent me letters to kui-zhou from north of the bo-yan mountains
at the time of greatest cold he sent me a fur coat made from black lambskins

the cold of snow and ice are repelled by it, they flee from the brocade sleeves
the strokes of his calligraphy are alive, dragons who miraculously change into characters
the purple dressed servant leaves to tell him his message has been communicated
i have told him to give my repeated thanks to him for his friendship

in the future i will have no need to see after my sons and grandchildren
they will appreciate even more than i the glory of his honorable abilities

murphy toadying with the best of them
7/12/2008 10:03 AM

von zach XI,58

song of the damascene sword of chao, cavalry inspector of jing-nan, president of the tai-chang-si

the houseboat of the president of the tai-chang-si proceeds noisily
he announces he has come to xiao-lao to inspect the troops and to expel all robbers
a hundred small boats of officials high and low crowd around to receive him
the bad rebels are seized while others flee like the wild animals they are

the bearer of the emperor's brocade coat enters the cold fortress of bo-di-cheng
in the dead of winter now he shows me his marvelous sword from arabia
he wears short military garb but with a tiger-skin cap on his head
on the balustrade he pulls the sword from its scabbard to flash up into the skies

it reflects the sun and would appear to make trees crash with the fury of its form
the surrounding ice becomes thin, clouds are bleached white, monkeys shout with grief
it is carefully oiled with the fat of a bird taken from a small green bottle
the sharp blade sparkles brighter than the shining winter waters

ghosts can be seen to hastily leave their homes in the moat
if the envoy of the river god were to reach for the red band on the hilt
he would hear complaints from brave giants of the long-bo regions, from the fish and turtles
governor rui from jing-nan has seen many rebels and his face is full of grief

as governor of the emperor he wishes to help the worthy men in this world
chao stands before him and sings a loud patriotic song
he draws his marvelous sword and promises to use it in service of the emperor
with this sword in his hand he will defend the emperor for all eternity

he receives from the governor the charge to seize the rebels for execution
the big river in si-chuan is yet narrow like a thread or a needle
the mountains around the area are nothing but crossbow's bowl
he must travel far and wide to round up all the many rebels

for this the forest goblins and water demons are of no use
the rebels must fear the might of his marvelous sword
he will know how to use it in the right way to sever those necks
his sword is light to swing and reaches a correct distance away

truly this sword is the sword of guang-lu of the heroic ages
and once again such a sword will be used to suppress all rioting
chao's portrait will be painted realistically for the unicorn gallery
his sword will shine forever with nothing allowed to stain it

murphy aswagger and armed to the teeth
7/12/2008 10:58 AM

von zach XII,59

the two crested falcons of cavalry inspector wang

up on the high balcony in the midst of mighty rocks
the bitter autumn winds ceaselessly attack
rushing torrents and sighing leaves combine their sound
below in the valley the big river winds its endless way

a waterspout lifts its spray toward the clouds
the sun sparkles its colors throughout the mist
two crested falcons hang on the arm of the general
his entourage are dressed as if for war

the taped hoods cover the two wild heads
then both are carefully and slowly removed
their eyes look steadily out into the world
they glint as savage as those of a tatar

any grouse or bamboo hare should be careful
if seen by these falcons there is no escape
even young tigers and the chamois run
they know when they should turn and flee

on the leather sleeve of the brave hunter
both falcons stretch their sharp-edged wing feathers
the bravery of the general is reflected
the falcons fear no living creature

the general has gained his position
his fame and his wealth while on duty in gan-su
he rode his horse to battle in the kun-lun mountains
and the country of yu-yuan in the extreme west

once his arrows tore into three large predator cats
his daring compares with the savagery of such beasts
rui-gong, governor of jing-nan, first appointed him
this competent general has since risen far

he compares favorably with the pair of crested falcons
who swoop down from the clouds onto their prey
now everywhere are rebels who attack in droves
to try to damage the palace of the emperor

who else but such brave men as wang-ang-rui
can expel these bandit birds of prey from our midst
and all of the heavens be released from their being
so that the good and the bad shall be effectively separate

murphy cutting a manly figure in his polo gear
7/14/2008 9:21 AM

von zach XII,60

i respectfully congratulate the prince of yang-cheng-jun on the appointment of his mother who has been honored by the imperial dispensation of the princess of deng-guo

general wei has received a high honor as once wei-jing received from the emperor his mother, as once did pan-yo's as reported in the wen-xuan, received congratulations in this critical time one expects the general to protect the honor of the state and because of this a high honor is bestowed upon his esteemed mother

she is thus elevated to a most prestigious and lofty position it is far and above any other offered to those around her the fief given to yang-cheng-jun by earlier emperors remains the same however, this fief is raised to the title of an empire and his mother is made princess

on the purple decree the characters are resplendent like dancing phoenixes they befit the scroll like early spring swallows bringing their congratulations the depth of your love for your mother is known to be like that of meng-zong one is reminded of lao-lai who cheered his old mother by dancing with her in colored clothes

your mother can be compared to ban-zhao who continued her brother ban-gu's histories she reminds of the mother of meng-zi who embroidered truth to help her son and your mother taught you righteousness as did meng-zi's and she exhibited great literary abilities as did ban-zhao's

you have always gone out of your way to honor your mother and you rose like a bird in the wind to offer loyal service to the emperor this double loyalty to mother and to emperor must find its reward your picture is to be painted as an immortal for the unicorn gallery

murphy as always belonging to his mother's clan
7/14/2008 2:34 PM

von zach XII,61

deep in winter

the blossoms and leaves are now fallen by will of the sky
rivers and brooks are sunk in their rocky beds outlining their way
the red glow of sunrise limns all things in a skeletal thereness
the cold body of water slides by in a wintry shallowness

how easy it is to pour tears as did yang-zhu lost far from home
my soul hard pines for the return to its native soil
the winds and waves of the evening river are dangerous
but then who could i call upon to row my boat

murphy hunkered for a winter of hanging tight
7/14/2008 2:52 PM

von zach XII,62

the beginning of day, two poems (1 of 2)

in the fortress the gongs of the night are no longer sounded
the iron chains behind the gates are soon taken down
drums and trumpets resound around this dull region
the stars and the milky way disappear behind glowing mountain tops

the population of si-chuan is belabored by this turmoil
imperial commissioners sent here from chang-an are soon murdered
i stand here in my old age like a lonesome yachtsman
slowly sailing through the land of a hundred barbarian tribes

murphy far from his family's home in texas
7/14/2008 3:03 PM

van zach XII,63

the beginning of day, two poems (2 of 2)

after opening the gates the officers return with their torches
my boatsmen begin singing their songs of si-chuan
the cold sand on the shore gives rise to light fogs on the river
the sinking moon disappears behind the purity of the waves

in my youth i fretted at the slowness of recognition of my worth
now in my old age i lament my entanglement with officialdom
i do not know if i will return to court as an official
i doubt whether i still have strength enough to offer my forces

murphy wincing through the first block on his morning walk for papers
7/14/2008 3:11 PM

von zach XII,64

the first day of the twelfth month, three poems (1 of 3)
(january 16, 776)

today is finally the twelfth month and the thoughts of spring can begin
the stream through the city of yun-an delights the eye
i hear the cry of the wild goose so a letter should be on its way
i watch the long rope of a boat as it is tugged slowly upstream

yet the eye is still not beguiled by fresh plum blossoms
and the arrival of pepper wine to beguile the heavens is not quite now
what i desire most is to draft imperial decrees in the ming-guan palace
but when will my lung sickness allow me to travel to court

murphy impatient in his acceptance of the earth's turning
7/14/2008 4:38 PM

von zach XII,65

the first day of the twelfth month, three poems (2 of 3)
(january 16, 776)

when it is cold, mountain smoke curling down around the market is greenish
with full sunlight the fogs about my house gleam with a yellow lambence
the girls of wu-xi bring salt here from hu-nan, a departing boat sounds its gong
as once zhou-yi from his new pavilion, i raise my eye and am saddened by the scenery

like si-ma-xiang-ru the author of mou-ling i suffer a long time from diabetes
i am, of course, not afraid that the blossoms of spring may not arrive
as a stranger here in the land of si-chuan i listen to the folk wisdom of barber-surgeons
i deplore both the lessening of my strength and the distance to my old homeland

murphy accepting the inevitable decline of age
7/14/2008 4:54 PM

von zach XII,66

the first day of the twelfth month, three poems (3 of 3)
(january 16, 776)

soon the swallows will return from beyond the mountain passes
and surely the yellow orioles can fly back over the mountains
the short-lived peach blossoms will appear all along the shore
light catkins will inevitably stick to my garments

when spring comes i feel my mind shall again become clear
as one grows old the meetings with family become ever rarer
if i drink a mug of wine in the future, can i keep from being overcome
i deplore both the lessening of my strength and the distance to my old homeland

murphy wondering when the doctors will rule out his drink
7/14/2008 5:13 PM

von zach XII,67

snow again

in the southern areas the snow does not leave the earth
it moistens the dark cliff walls and it never seems to melt
yet bit by bit it grows thinner from the growing strength of sun
such snow is seen from afar by all who look to the peaks

if the winter is warm the mandarin ducks grow ill
where the gorges are deep in snow wolves and tigers abound
for me i am full of grief in these distant borderlands
if only i could follow the stream down to the emperor's court

murphy pacing the floor in his cabin-fever angst
7/14/2008 5:23 PM

von zach XII,68

i accompany censor wang to a farewell banquet at fang-sheng-chi pond in east si-chuan

many friends of the art of poetry have gathered here in east si-chuan
i dare not be frivolous but offer only the best of my efforts in my writing
and i am even more careful since we are near a buddhist cloister
we can be nothing less than regretful at this separation

plum blossoms fill the surrounding countryside with color
the green of spring vegetation surrounds the calm surface of the pond
when you should reflect on your time here in the land of the big river
i trust that you will wish to return, and kindly tell us when we might expect you back

murphy telling himself he is not as bad off as he imagines
7/14/2008 5:34 PM

von zach XII,69