

i travel by boat from jiang-ling to gong-an on the southern shore of the yang-zi. respectfully i send this verse to underprefect zheng-shen.

where shall i go when i set out to leave the shores of jiang-ling  
i have nothing left but a dubious faith in this wobbly old boat  
my body has always been an encumbrance like a clod of earth  
recently i have rowed around exploring the river and the lakes

the country is shackled and in the hands of sinister forces  
armed unrest still follows me, now only an old wizened scholar  
my entire life i have been nothing but a discarded object  
everywhere i have traveled i have found only misery

the rain has washed clean the sandy shore  
the river winds away into the hills to join the sky  
a cicada sings from its floating piece of wood  
a swallow flies south from out the river plants

i was only able to stay in jiang-ling for a while  
finding no peace i force myself to travel into the distance  
i have found no one here who is willing to help me  
though i offered my services to all who would listen

the sea of china is in turmoil from churning flukes of whales  
so now this flying wild goose flees south to hu-nan  
there i seek to find a friend as once chen-fan sought xu-zhi  
or i might go east as once did confucius in despair

in vain have i hoped to be of use as was ning-qi for duke huan  
and i always feared the fate of the sobbing bien-he who was not believed  
on my trip i remember how zheng-zhuang offered horses for his guests  
and i ask that you consider helping me in my desolation

murphy grasping at proverbial straws  
5/22/2009 1:07 PM

von zach XIX,1

i spend the night at a roadside inn in the mountains on my way to gong-an

there are many fogs during the day here in the southern regions  
a north wind now blows and brings with it cold weather  
i wander between mountain peaks on a narrow mountain trail  
far away from other people i am next to the clouds

later my lamp flickers from the breath of the mountain goblins  
my servants talk with the guest-house chef deep into the night  
at cockcrow i wake to wonder where my next guest house will be  
and whether i will ever find a place where i enjoy a lasting peace

murphy always betting on a better day ahead  
5/26/2009 7:46 AM

von zach XIX,2

i sit in the state pavilion and write this jesting poem for sub-district judge yan of gong-an

now in the cold season the clapping sounds of washing paddles are pleasing  
it is evening and the sun is sinking behind the upper regions of the yang-zi  
my sadness of being in a foreign land is deepened by the sound of crickets  
around this old state pavilion the river reeds grow thick and high

i sit here in vain through this night with only my candlelight for companionship  
you have not come back on your horse decorated so nicely with blue embroidery  
i am only an old man who waits for you, one of the judges of the district  
i had hoped to help you drink slowly the "liquid sunrise" wine you fetch

murphy lacking only friends and wine to make a party  
5/26/2009 8:01 AM

von zach XIX,3

in a drunken state i sing this song to sub-district judge yan of gong-an, and ask the calligrapher gu to write it on the wall

it is not easy to find a man who can become an immortal like a second mei-fu  
but the talent of this offspring of the yan family is truly extraordinary  
he is like an eager sky horse whinnying as he awaits his rider, the emperor  
he is like an autumn hawk spreading his wings high in the clouds of heaven

does he know of the calligrapher gu-jie-she who comes from east-wu  
has he not heard of the old man du fu from du-ling in shen-si  
the poem of this old person and the strokes of that calligrapher will please him  
a verse is painted now in gu's strokes on the wall of his entrance hall

on this day the seven lakes of chu are frozen by an icy wind  
the sun setting in the barbarian lands to the west reddens the town wall  
i am drunk from the wine, my ears are red, and my white hair is tousled  
i am stirred by the warm hospitality and wish to give an appropriate gift

therefore i have improvised this poem for the host and his guests to sing

murphy not needing a lampshade to be the life of the party  
5/27/2009 8:47 AM

von zach XIX,4

i move from jiang-ling to gong-an-xian, respectfully dedicated to chamberlain wei-zhun

it is a high honor to meet a man like chamberlain wei  
especially since he shows sympathy for my illness  
his heart is warm and his feelings generous  
he reaches out a welcoming hand to all he sees

all my life i have held him in the highest esteem  
since my youth i have admired his elegant verse  
we have always shared values which commingle  
like the huang-he flowing to the sea or clouds sharing the sky

now my body is battered and i have quickly aged  
i have withdrawn my guileless being from the affairs at court  
hermits always complain the emperor does not recognize their abilities  
brave men grieve over having yet to achieve lasting success

river fogs permeate throughout your garden paths  
the autumn dew moistens the hollyhocks thriving there  
i have come to gong-an to escape the fighting with the rebels  
i am a wounded bird hungry and desperate to escape

in spite of my white hair i am a fit guest for your banquets  
i have brought nothing with me but my wit and black leather chair  
in the past i have been disappointed in hospitality i have been offered  
but this morning i feel refreshed and strengthened by your friendly welcome

murphy throwing himself onto the kindness of strangers  
5/29/2009 8:36 AM

von zach XIX,5

in gong-an i escort sub-district judge wei, second of his clan as he leaves

many descendants of wei-jiang have achieved success  
i attend one now to the moored boat as the banquet comes to an end  
i trust you will remember me with a few of your poems  
those i have given you should be held close and not broadcast

one can never be too careful in times of ongoing struggle  
i am living my waning days here in the land of rivers and lakes  
since ancient times men have always shed tears at partings  
this personal rain is recognition of how alone we stand in the storms of life

murphy maintaining the courtesies expected  
5/29/2009 8:56 AM

von zach XIX,6

dedicated to police officer yu, fifteenth of his clan

i have long revered the deceased minister yu-shan-nan as a model  
and now i have the pleasure of making his grandson's acquaintance  
your facial features are similar to the portraits of your ancestors  
the glory of your family shines forth in your vigorous appearance

i grieve in remembrance of the beautiful calligraphy of your ancestors  
and i look forward to your sharing your wisdom with me  
your cheerful nature is the clear wide sky of an autumn day  
your conversations are sprinkled with shimmering beads of fresh dew

you are like the phoenix nesting in the giant southern mountains, singing  
you are like the kun fish of the north sea transforming itself into the bird rock  
and i know how much we can never learn about those we hold as our friends  
but we two share a deep understanding of our confucian philosophies

you always welcome me as family when i have occasion to be your guest  
we share fragrant wine throughout the days and nights of entertainments  
the leaves of the trees sigh in the winds from the sandy shore  
the clouds above are parting as the moon shines into your windows

i regret that the major part of my life is now behind me  
yet i clearly see the happiness of the other guests around me  
in gratitude i would like to give you all the books i possess  
but sadly many dark mountains separate me from them back in my homeland

murphy relegated to only an occasional vicarious happiness  
5/29/2009 9:20 AM

von zach XIX,7

in gong-an-xian i think of ancient times

here in this vast wilderness lu-meng once had a warehouse  
here on the banks of the deep stream by the ancient fortress of liu-bei  
in this winter weather the sun sinks quickly to begin the long night  
the wind lashes the waves and the spray rises to the clouds

how natural was the harmony achieved by liu-bei and his minister zhu-ge-liang  
how impressively high spread the fame of the always victorious lu-meng  
i moor my boat here on the southern shore of the great yang-zi  
i chant a drawn out song of grief replete with my historical memories

murphy carrying an immense load of pertinent experience  
6/1/2009 9:00 AM

von zach XIX,8



the vulture snapping at the air

this ailing vulture finds himself quite alone  
shunned by the more fit animals, despised  
he sleeps in a hollow willow through the night  
in the chill autumn at sundown his body is stooped

the geese flying by turn their eyes away in fear  
even the ravens will not allow themselves to see  
the vulture's martial mien is no longer there  
his alertness of mind has quite disappeared

his wingfeathers are loose and disheveled  
his energy nothing compared to the white tailed eagle  
this is the bird whose power and energy  
far exceeded that of the hunting blue falcon

now it is autumn the winds kick up choppy waves  
in the cold darkness loom the solid mountains  
bears and their kin now seek their winter sleep  
dragons and snakes hide in their deep holes

i believe the vulture if not so sick would prevail  
this winter would be a lean but vigorous time  
but he has lost his voice and his strength  
his blood oozes, taking with it his vital breath

murphy disgruntled by the loss of his long vanished youth  
6/2/2009 7:58 AM

von zach XIX,9

in gong-an-xian i give this poem to my young friend li-jin-su, 29th of his clan

now when i am contemplating going on to giu-giang  
i find you here traveling down river to si-chuan  
our two ships move in opposite directions  
as a crowd of wild geese fly by from across the northern border

i drive south on the han river toward the bronze border pillars  
you drive onto the western upper reaches of the yang-zi to cheng-du-fu  
i give you now a hundred coins of copper and ask a favor  
seek out a wise man there and ask where i will end up on my journey

murphy clutching at a soothsayer's straws of certitude  
6/2/2009 8:13 AM

von zach XIX,10

the north wind

the north wind visits unkindly here in the south  
the red phoenix of the dynasty continues to lose its prestige  
in the fall the snow falls on dong-ting lake  
the storks and wild geese know not where to turn

for ten years the orgiastic murders have continued  
and the population has decreased throughout the land  
i am favorably reminded of the four white-heads of the han dynasty  
in seclusion they ate the miracle mushrooms even in the quieter times

murphy making up sories that fit his situation  
6/3/2009 8:35 AM

von zach XIX,11

remembrance of the past

i remember when i once visited the xiao-you caves  
they are to be found in the wang-wu mountains  
while there i crossed the stormy waves of the mighty huang-he  
luck was with me for i had only a flimsy boat to use

there, in spite of all my valiant efforts  
i did not find the immortal hua-gai-jun  
the green tip of land where he had lived  
was uninhabited and had fallen into ruin

the thousand crags were worn and desolate  
the many valleys and gulches were abandoned  
every three steps i climbed i looked all around  
after five i had to sit for a while to rest and think

these autumnal mountains disappointed my eyes  
there was no evidence there of the immortal's spirit  
i knew i was not to be able to meet the venerable sage  
i sat while twin rivers flowed over my cheeks

i wondered if perhaps one of his pupils was still there  
the delapidated reed huts might still afford shelter  
an old man of lu was still there with the key  
he opened the gates of the rusted castle

with a cloth he brushed the top of the table  
he collected the fragrant residue of the crushed medicines  
he swept the steps of the ashes from the sacred fire  
that which was used to prepare the elixir of life

how can i go to look for him now where he resides in kun-lun  
it is much too difficult to travel there to the islands of the blessed  
though i can imagine seeing the horse tails on his golden cane  
and his garments of feathers fluttering gracefully in the wind

as the sun rises first in the east and sets in the west  
traveling all this distance in but a single day  
so too he is first in the east and soon in the west  
because nothing is impossible for him to achieve

here among the wind whipped spruce trees  
where the mountain torrents mingle in the gorges  
i hear the bellowing of water buffalo  
mingled with the roaring of the great brown bear

i can only search for remnants, traces the immortal left behind  
i find myself looking out before me and sighing loudly  
i must face up to the fact that my most sincere desire  
that of meeting this immortal, is to be unfulfilled

i will be unable to be shown his mystic writings of apprenticeship  
my dreams of enlightenment must be put on hold  
but also i face up to my lack of monies to pursue my dreams  
how can i continue to support such an effort in my sickly old age

yet i determine to turn toward heng-yang to seek further  
there i might be able to visit the immortal dong-zhing  
despite all i will point my boat south to continue this journey  
i will travel there on the rivers xiao and xiang

murphy still mystical despite his scientific training, and proud of it  
6/11/2009 8:11 AM

von zach XIX,12

i escort the officers of the crown prince and the calligrapher gu-jie-she as they leave for hong-zhou and ji-zhou

after cai-yong inscribed the six classics on stone in the ba-fen script  
the ba-fen writing became somewhat neglected by calligraphers  
but then the calligrapher gu-jie-she appeared with his talented brush  
he breathed new life and brought the style to new completion

then came the government period kai-yuan and its rebirth  
han-ze-mu and cai-you-lin together with gu brought great beauty to the ba-fen style  
because the emperor tang-ming-huang loved this writing so much  
he summoned these three men to become members of his court

as the imperial decrees became written in this script it became wide spread  
it became evident that these three men had immense talents  
the three worked together in the imperial court  
and the same imperial mercy was shown to each

it was gu-jie-she who wrote in more than just the pa-fen style  
he paid much attention to perfecting the xiao-chuan mode  
on different days he visited individual princes to show his art  
each example was outstanding and held a powerful mystery as its power

when gu and i were wandering about together as friends  
he showed not the slightest interest in gaining fame or profit  
for twenty years we delighted in each other's company  
and countless times we drunkenly roamed the streets of chang-an

we sang in loud voices as guests of high dignitaries and ministers  
our literary efforts were offered throughout the administrative bodies  
he thought my style similar to yang-xiong and si-ma-xiang-ru  
and vowed not to abandon me as a friend throughout our lives

when he came to visit me in my dilapidated alley on his proud horse  
he removed the golden bridle work to save me embarrassment  
remembering how deeply he felt friendship then  
how could i dare to forget him in our old age

yet since the oldest time change is a constant in human relations  
and i again weep tears for the returning hurt of a new parting  
and i reflect on how few of those who once flaunted golden bridles  
are now still occupying positions of high esteem

my skills have certainly declined as has my thin body  
because of my diabetes i have been an imperfect official  
but you, my old friend, have remained steadfast  
you continue to help the nation in this our time of great troubles

i have resigned myself to old age and the ravages of disease  
while you still have the ambition to assist the emperor better the world  
but you seem to be concerned with clothing needs and food  
your face seldom shows the glow of ease and satisfaction

now you are embarked on a difficult trip to distant areas  
and in so doing you follow the wish of your extended family  
but don't forget that your boat is old and decidedly unsafe  
that dragons lurk in anticipation of any disaster you might suffer

there are also pirates who roam the rivers in these dark times  
and the heavens will often visit terrible and unexpected storms  
it seems that in these war torn period bad news comes often  
many are the reports of officials being murdered as they serve

now you are going east to visit the governors of hong-zhou and zhi-zhou  
you must caution them not to be arbitrary in their decisions  
without a prosperous people as foundation the empire is hollow  
and hungry fish will be the first to take a tasty bait

i implore you to communicate to the officials to have compassion  
that to ameliorate the deep wounds of the country will take time  
moreover they must be careful in the election of new officials  
only after a record of solid achievement should anyone be recommended

and remember there is a profound difference between good and bad officials  
the good collect a fair share of taxes, the bad suck the marrow from the people  
a patriot detests taking more than what he properly deserves  
a hero takes pride in using only legitimate strengths to achieve his purpose

i dedicate these lines to you in the manner of the poem of lu-zhi to the wild tiger  
i accompany you to the outskirts of town and my tears flow freely

murphy sick and bedraggled, but with his head and his heart still in the game  
6/16/2009 7:56 AM

von zach XIX,13

i send this poem back to the priest tai-yi as i depart

i have now the desire to visit lu mountain  
to make a life as a hermit as once did hui-yuan  
here in gong-an i have met a marvelous priest  
who writes poetry the equal of the priest tang-hui-xiu

he has visited me on my boat numerous times  
and he has always left behind his admirable verse  
now when i open my suitcase of books  
i find his work which inspires me to emulation

i look out on the white sandy shore of the village  
and marvel that it is as if the snow had never thawed  
the red plum blossoms have just come into bloom  
this is the always welcome time when spring returns

i plan to reach the incense kettle point of lu mountain  
i will build a hermitage for us both and await his arrival  
i see him coming slowly walking with his cane  
he will leave the dusty world behind and fly to my side

murphy persistent in his pursuit of nirvana  
6/16/2009 9:58 AM

von zach XIX,14



i leave gong-an at daybreak

the clatter of the nightwatchman on the northern wall has stopped  
the morning star has risen in the east and it will soon be light  
the roosters will crow in the city as they do every morning  
though the ephemeral beauties of spring will change again as always

now my boat begins its final journey into the unknown  
i am headed deeper into the region of rivers and lakes with no set goal  
the separation lasts for only a few moments and gong-an-xian is now behind me  
i take my medicines and they are all that i have to sustain myself

murphy finally letting the current take him where it will  
6/16/2009 1:27 PM

von zach XIX,15

a song at the end of the year

this year approaches its end with an encroaching cold  
the north wind blows unwelcome and with pause  
the area around the xiao and xiang rivers enters winter  
they and the dong-ting lake are surrounded by deep snow

the nets of the fisherman have become useless  
they freeze solid on the boats in the bitter winds  
the mo-yao barbarians bend their mulberry bows  
but it is only in vain attempts to shoot wild geese

the rice crop last year was short and thus expensive  
the troops grew lean with inadequate scant rations  
this year the rice has become somewhat cheaper  
but all still suffer from deprivations

the ranking officials ride, comfortable on their strong horses  
they feed gluttonously on fat meat and much wine  
the looms of the farmers are covered in dust  
their owners sitting idle in their reed covered huts

the inhabitants of the land of chu eat fish and eschew birds  
but this doesn't stop the mo-yao from shooting at the geese  
people have grown so hungry they sell anything of value for food  
i have even heard of many selling their girls, even their boys

the parents overcome their love in order to pay their taxes  
and thus to free themselves from forced public labor  
in earlier times there were strict rules for the economy  
it was strictly forbidden to adulterate coinage in any way

now permission is given to add base metals, lead and tin  
no longer is it possible to find coins of real copper  
anyone can make clay molds for making new coins  
it is very easy for all to make false monies

but it does no one good to deceive the public in this way  
flooding the market with bad money hurts everyone  
the trumpets of war sound from the walls of all the empire's towns  
when will these melancholy melodies finally be brought to an end

murphy vainly wishing to meddle in the affairs of state  
6/18/2009 9:13 AM

von zach XIX,16

i leave liu-lang-pu

i hoist the sail and leave liu-lang-pu early in the morning  
a sharp wind blows and dark clouds dim midday  
these days one meets no other boats on the waters  
in the empty villages by the river one hears wolves and tigers

for ten days the north wind has blown its cold fury  
traveling at the end of the year is a misery  
my old white head is not up to this fisherman's life  
i wish my bamboo hat and sandals were back in my native country

murphy futilely pressing ever onward  
6/18/2009 11:12 AM

von zach XIX,17

dong-ting leaves for deng-zhou

at the end of winter the wind-whipped waves roar past  
it is almost impossible to raise the sails above the waters  
because the scholars here cannot find enough food for an elder  
he now leaves his berth and as a pious son ignores the cold

he will go search for his paradise further south  
heading toward deng-zhou, a lesser capital in he-nan  
as he leaves he takes his ideas with his oars  
i feel great compassion for him with his thin clothes in this cold

i have long known of the loyalty of the prefect zhao of deng-zhou  
he is also known for his hospitality in this time of troubles  
your mother already waits for you there in the town  
she must not keep waiting for you until the snow has melted

as i stand here the mooring rope is being released  
and i think ahead to my uneaten breakfast of rice  
in this time of war, rioting and turmoil  
when will my heart find a safe place to rest

the region of han-yang is now calm and at peace  
so i will remain in loneliness here in the xian mountains  
when you remember me in the future with my white cap of a hermit  
know that i will be picking ferns high at the edge of the clouds

murphy shedding the skins of all his friends  
6/22/2009 1:37 PM

von zach XIX,18

life as a hermit

a lonely cloud looks out again on a lonely cloud  
miraculous beings know when they should appear  
the phoenix stays in the highest reaches of heaven  
and is therefore almost never to be seen by mortal men

before i had thought to meet with hui-yuan and xu-xun  
in the solitude of the isle of the immortals, when i was fifty  
i cannot question the high heavens where they now are  
they have discarded me and disappeared like any lost object

in my heart i must question whether i am capable of the solitary life  
for if so i must have been found by them to be their inferior  
meanwhile they are entertaining themselves beyond the world sea  
having been rowed over the blustering waves to the isle of the immortals

the sun climbs high in the east, beyond the fu-sang tree  
and shines also on the coral trees in that blessed place  
those here sit under the canopy of their sail boat  
and hold to the thought of the east as the evening approaches

i try to live on my own saliva in hopes of attaining wisdom  
those secrets of the mind world which feed on clouds in the red of morning  
but because of my striving for position in this world  
i am unsuitable for a life with the four wise men of shang mountain

the dong-ting lake extends before me to vanish on the horizon  
while i grieve in my old age that i may not follow those hermits

murphy counting lost opportunities which will never return  
6/29/2009 11:17 AM

von zach XIX,19

i anchor in the town of yo-yang

the great river yang-zi stretches over a thousand miles  
the city of yo-yang lies high up river in the surrounding mountains  
the onshore breeze of evening builds up the waves  
on the boat the falling snow moistens my feeble lamp

despite all my problems as i travel my talent is still with me  
the difficulties i encounter merely stiffen my resolve  
one can never know when a big success may come  
when i might depart past the bird rock and fly to the south

murphy still able to dream  
6/25/2009 7:38 AM

von zach XIX,20

because of the strong wind my boat remains tied up. i respectfully send a joke-poem to judge  
zheng, 13th of his clan

the north wind blew fiercely on the shores of chu  
the black cranes screamed their displeasure down by the water  
the wind-blown sand covered the vegetaion along the shore  
snowflakes danced in the storm lashing the stream and the lakes

the wind took my hat again and again, so i tied up here  
it has been a few days without let-up and i am lonely  
i humbly request you send a post horse here for me  
then we can find a wine bar together for a few drinks

murphy finding a party where one least expects it  
6/25/2009 7:50 AM

von zach XIX,21

i climb the tower at yo-zhou to look out over dong-ting lake

earlier i had only heard about the great lake of dong-ting  
so i climbed the tower at yo-zhou to see it for the first time  
the lake lies to the south of wu and to the east of chu  
the winds of heaven stir its waters into choppy waves both day and night

i have not heard from my friends and relatives for a long time  
the only companionship for this old sick man is his crew  
north of the passes of shen-si the war still rages on  
far from home i stand on the balustrade and weep bitter tears

murphy seeing his latter days slowly slip away  
6/25/2009 8:03 AM

von zach XIX,22



i respectfully escort my old friend, sub-district judge wei-yo, as he leaves for jiao-guang

there have always been heroes who helped the emperor govern  
who were left nothing afterward but the dead ashes of fame  
their sons and grandsons could not maintain the status of the family  
this has been a continuing story under many dynasties

wei-yo is the great-grandchild of wei-zheng, duke of zheng  
and has suffered all his adult life from continuing hunger  
this, although he stands out from others by his qualities  
one notices immediately that here is a young unicorn

in numerous affairs of the zheng-guan government period  
wei-zheng gave his advice to the emperor simply and sincerely  
the fame of the family spread to all lands under heaven  
there is no reason for his descendant wei-yo to wander in need

you have met me here in the north of the cong-wu mountains  
it was a surprise for we had not seen each other for a long while  
your wit in conversation is as always extraordinarily versatile  
one believes you should soon be made use of by the nobility

yet you have striven in vain for a lofty well-paid position  
you now laugh at yourself for this failure of your ambition  
but even si-ma-xiang-ru was not used by the court for many years  
so you should not give up your appropriate aspirations

you are as poor as su-chin when he returned home in his ratty sable pelts  
where he was mocked unmercifully by his wife and sister-in-law  
still you are here now the guest of the provisional governor  
though he as yet uses you only as a small official for mundane tasks

now you leave to the hot region around the southern sea  
leaving me here lonely, behind in the far distance  
in your straitened condition you accept the wisdom of the heavens  
so you leave your home unperturbed trusting in fate

it is just at the end of the year that you unfurl your sails  
i would like it if you might return to visit on the spring winds  
while there you will be the guest of many respectable families  
their houses will be decorated with delicate carvings of dragons

the food they offer is next to the magnificence of princes  
the music of their parties will touch your heart and make you sad  
their servants are so attentive as to lull an entire city to ease

their silk garments are as light and ephemeral as fog and smoke

in one hand they will hold a mug carved from amber  
the other will pour the wine with an elegance of form  
these joys will be new to you and will continue deep into the night  
inside will be the gleaming of candles, outside the sparkle of stars

within a short time the beneficent hearts of the hosts will shine  
as pearls and precious stones are showered on the guests  
within this embarrassment of riches show sincerity to your superiors  
and harbor no suspicions when dealing with your subordinates

if you present your innermost thoughts directly to the governor with conviction  
you will be given worthwhile tasks to bring to necessary fruition  
this would be like once shi-chong, heedless of the emperor's wrath  
fearlessly shattering the coral tree which jin-wu-di had given to wang-kai

on the one hand you must have determined bold behavior  
but on the other you must have consideration as befits a guest  
that is the darkening world of war you are entering into  
i regret we must part now and go our separate ways

murphy living in his mind the struggles of his young friends  
6/26/2009 2:27 PM

von zach XIX,23

at the end of winter i give this poem to gentleman-in-waiting qian-zhang-sun as he returns to his house

i gave up my position as a military counsellor of the governor  
now i wander about as a vagabond and cannot return to my homeland  
i live in a foreign land to the south beyond the xiao and xiang rivers  
while the western barbarians extend their sway in hu-xian and du-ling

i have made your acquaintance here late in my life  
and you have tarried long with me without thought of lost time  
i trust you will let me know soon when we can meet again  
my sad soul watches the unmooring of your boat

the sky is cloudless and the dancing gulls make festive play  
whereas the wild geese fly in disorder due to the harsh winds  
i offer this box which contains two extremely sharp swords  
if you like one take it and use it as gan-jiang and mo-ye have done

murphy arming his dreams as a feeble old man  
6/29/2009 12:58 PM

von zach XIX,24

in the company of imperial commissioner pei i climb to the tower of yo-zhou

across the expansive lake lies the ever present clouds and fog  
the lonely tower of yo-zhou stands out in the serene evening sky  
you treat me kindly as once did governor chen-fan his friend xu-zhi  
your lovely poetry reminds me of the famous du-xie-tiao

on the snowy shore of the lake one sees many plum blossoms  
the mud is just beginning to show the coming fresh vegetation  
why should i go against the advice of the fisherman as once did chu-yuan  
and continue to move on even further south than i find myself now

murphy using any excuse to justify himself  
6/29/2009 2:49 PM

von zach XIX,25

i escort my cousin judge wan-li as he leaves to go to nan-hai in guang-dong

my great-great aunt on my father's side was the mother of your great-grandfather  
when your great-grandfather wang-gui was yet minister she was his wife

at the end of the da-ye government period in the sui dynasty  
the fang and du families befriended your great-grandfather  
the oldest of the two families once lived in your great-grandfather's house  
in those years of drought it was difficult to find enough food to live

once your family was in such need that the guests could be given no food  
next to their seats was only a broom and shovel for the waste  
but then suddenly wonderful dishes were brought to the table  
later the house returned to quietude once the guests were gone

when your great-grandfather entered the women's quarter  
he had to sigh when he found his wife without a hair chignon  
she turned to him and said that this is a time of war and need  
that one must extend oneself to nurture men of competence

she had checked the importance of the invited guests  
they were all of substance and were talents within the government  
she mentioned that she knew wang-gui would be there  
and that the young li-shi-min would show his wavy beard

and she had decided that her husband's future  
might be decided by these famous and powerful men  
she reminded that the moment of action belongs to those who act  
then dragons and tigers combine the richness of their voices

now was the time for her to show the bravery of a man  
and to throw off the weakness of being a woman  
prince li-shi-min prince of chin was indeed among the guests  
his majestic appearance surprised the entire house

later at the beginning of the zheng-guan governmental period  
wang-gui was elevated to the position of ministerial director  
his wife then was normally carried around in a sedan chair  
she often visited the palace to congratulate the emperor at festivities

her deportment was noted by the women of the harem  
and her modest devotion and morality influenced the imperial women  
the emperor treated her as if she were the wife of his older brother  
her influence and character is attested to in the histories

the descendant of such a phoenix pairing cannot be an ordinary person  
and who else but you will evidence their level of talents  
when at the moment of the uprising of the traitor an-lu-shan  
the entire world was filled with the moaning of the people

i wished to establish myself back in tong-zhou  
and your family accompanied mine as they fled there  
in that time of terrible chaos i was without a horse  
forced to travel alone on foot i kept hidden in the high grasses

my staying behind worried you and though you had gone ten miles  
you came back and called to me to come out of my hiding  
you had me climb up in the saddle to leave that place  
you gave me your powerful sword to defend myself

you led the horse with the reins in your left hand  
you ran beside us while i sat high in all good comfort  
thus it is that i owe to you the life i now have, for my beating heart  
i will never be able to thank you adequately for your merciful aid

now it is much later in this time of warlike riots, and we are parting  
since the earliest recorded history separating has been full of pain  
waves of emotion overcome this useless old white-head  
while your green uniform reminds of the sprouting spring grass

now you proceed to your position as a judge alongside the higher officials  
surely the governor of guang-dong will recognize your extreme competency  
for here you will proceed first by carriage to han-yang in the north  
then you will go south from there on the shuang river

when you arrive you are sure to uphold the fame of your family  
and wield a sharp sword to delineate the keen fairness of your decisions  
the governor there, li-mian of pan-yu belongs to the imperial family  
his strategy is always to rely upon the aid of incisive minds

as governor he is more upright than lu-huan or song-jing  
he has forbidden the bestowing of jewels and precious objects as bribes  
the headmen of the barbarians have submitted to him, one after another  
the ships of foreign peoples come in the thousands to trade there

i would love to accompany you there to get cinnabar, the elixir of life  
but the strain of the long trip would be too much for my feeble body  
why is it that i find myself deeply mired here in the mud  
while i have the ambition of a whale or giant turtle to ride over the seas

murphy as an old man seeing with more and more clarity the dimunition of his worth  
7/1/2009 12:17 PM

von zach XIX,26

to visit the giant southern mountain i travel on dong-ting lake

as we approach the lake the waves become suddenly higher  
around a bend we see this difference comes from dong-ting lake  
i have left the high woods of hu-be behind me  
my ship is headed toward the giant southern mountain

i notice that the fragrant water grass has raised her green sprouts  
while the reeds in the cold water exhibit their green knots  
where can i travel by walking with my severe diabetes  
at the beginning of spring my strength is at its lowest ebb

i see farmers are beginning to plow even though snow still falls  
all the fishermaen have built their small huts out of mud  
the sails are swollen by the strong winds and the boat heels  
i can see in the blurry distance the lonely postal station

behind me beyond the vast waters lie the red walls  
before me the cang-wu mountains where emperor shun is buried  
both the daughters whom yao gave to shun in marriage have grieved there  
and remember that cao-cao's plans were thwarted by the famous red wall

the throne of the sublime tang dynasty was then in bright ascendancy  
with only the turfan remaining as a danger to be reckoned with  
talented and honorable men are now found among the servants and workers  
and in these critical times even famous nobles withdraw into loneliness

in the qin times shao-ping returned as a private man to chang-an to plant melons  
and the notable zhang-wan proceeded in the end to his native country of wu  
yet i remain here in exile with my cheeks frequently wet by bitter tears  
even on through the night my boat with its high mast is followed by crows

murphy without a better plan moving just to be moving  
7/2/2009 11:38 AM

von zach XIX,27



i stay overnight in my boat on the qing-cao lake

the dong-ting lake lies still farther on ahead of me  
it is actually a broadening and continuation of this qing-cao lake  
i am staying on my boat near a field along the shore  
my hourglass warns me of approaching night so i do not sail on

blocks of ice in the water constantly bump against my sides  
the moon stays mostly hidden behind the thick clouds  
occasionally wild geese fly up from the lake surface to go north  
i berate them for being able to do so while i must remain here

murphy playing out the bitter end game though it is already lost  
7/2/2009 11:50 AM

von zach XIX,28

i spend the night on my boat beside the postal station at white sands

it is still quite light when i decide to stop here to spend the night  
on the shore i see the postal station and men around their dwellings  
the lake bank here has had snow-white sand along the bank since the oldest times  
it is quite beautiful when seen beside the fresh new grass which begins to grow

all of nature now burgeons with the young strength of spring  
i am only a dim star here on my lonely boat and as ever a stranger  
though i do enjoy the light as it gaily glimmers on the rippling waves  
it makes me feel as if the heavens were descending to the lake surface

murphy still able to recognize a propitious time when it occurs  
7/2/2009 12:01 PM

von zach XIX,29

on my journey up stream i express my feelings

earlier when peace reigned i had already become quite sick  
now when the rioting and unrest have enveloped us i remain unwell  
my whole life has been misfortunate because of stupidity  
how could my hair have not turned white and grown sparse

i have wandered about incessantly between the four seas  
and my children have been forced to rely on the support of foreign people  
now i am constantly meeting young people who are unknown to me  
the times i meet friends and relations are welcome but very rare

i can tell from the friendly words and kindly faces  
that they continue to hold me in esteem and wish me well  
but the younger generation is overly proud and not courteous  
they react negatively to my age and my physical decline

my extreme distress has worn down my earlier ambition  
i have always been on the move with a sense of desperation  
already twelve years have passed since i left chang-an  
after traveling throughout si-chuan i find myself in the southern regions

my lonely boat floats through many blossoming water plants  
i pass my old days between reed flowers and willow branches  
in blurred darkness the grave of emperor shun lies in the cang-wu mountains  
the bones of the five wise men are already long disintegrated

i have been unable to participate in the period of emperor yao  
xi-he has driven his sun chariot for too long since i have been away  
in the interim period both qu-yuan and jia-yi have found misfortune  
as they swam against the current they suffered the calumnies of enemies

perhaps both of these tormented souls have drifted here  
to disappear into the loneliness of these rivers and lakes  
as i proceed up the transparent xiang river i see many rocks  
all along the shore i see only thick impenetrable forest

the rowers show their craft as they take great care as they go  
they develop a joy in their work and are often tipsy with laughter  
they urge each other on to greater effort with loud songs  
they communicate with the man at the rudder with winks and gestures

i infer that every human activity develops special skills  
and within any of them there are men who attain true expertise  
why should competent officials be so rarely found  
they were not just appointed by the emperor but earned their places

now as the evening grows dim the colors of day dive into the darkness  
giant black pythons hang from the trees and one hears the snuffling of bears  
it is said the brown si-chuan bear climbs up into the branches  
while many tigers prowl on the ground around the bases of the trees

where should i now drag my skeletal, sickly old frame  
surrounded by mortal dangers i strive only to continue my life  
i trust that knowledgeable men will understand and not blame  
as i struggle along my way through the mire of this riot torn world

murphy determined to keep the ship afloat and not abandon it  
7/4/2009 2:17 PM

von zach XIX,30

the memorial temple for the two wives of emperor shun

i stand before the still impressive temple for the two wives of emperor shun  
the swollen spring waters of the xiang river flow beside the now desolate walls  
worms have left trails of their travels over the girdle belts of the statues  
swallows fly up and disturb the dust lying on the overhanging green canopies

it is evening so i moor my boat and climb through the woods on the shore  
to express my reverential respect i ritually sacrifice some water plants  
the grief of these two women at the death of emperor shun was extraordinarily deep  
i imagine the stains of the bamboo trunks to be solemn vestiges of their tears

murphy standing erect and stoic over his father's grave  
7/6/2009 10:14 AM

von zach XIX,31

the evening view on the south side of the memorial temple at evening

my boat is pulled with a long rope upstream on the xiang river  
the lonely boat swims over the golden surface lit by the setting sun  
i become desirous of walking on the shore despite my old age  
into the far distance to the south along the river i see only clouds and sand

the mountain goblins would surely be lost in the effusive spring bamboo  
it seems to me as if the spirits of the two women float by the flowers  
travelers have always been attracted to this beautiful area south of dong-ting lake  
they seek to experience the atmosphere where qu-yuan was exiled

murphy as always appreciative of natural beauty  
7/8/2009 10:10 AM

von zach XIX,32

i describe what i see

respectfully i take prolonged leave of my gracious hosts  
i hoist my sails and ride out on the high choppy waves  
the high waters of spring have flooded the entire south  
the sun half obscured by clouds stands high over the red cliffs of dan-zhou

my oarsmen have forgotten how to stop to sleep or eat  
they are continually working the ship in this stormy weather  
my trip thus far cannot be said to have been a very happy one  
that we have come this far i owe to the heroic efforts of the rowers

among the rocks along the shore i see women collecting ferns  
they wish to sell them in the market to help pay their taxes  
their men have all died in the army serving the state  
they commiserate with each other in the evening after their work

i had heard before about the extent of this problem, and now see it  
even the smallest bit of profit is heavily taxed by the officials  
are these government men without even a semblance of humanity  
do they really consider the people to be worthless as weeds

they are always inventing new ways to leech money from these women  
and everywhere one hears the moaning of the poor dying of starvation  
why do the young officers treat them with such gratuitous violence  
why do they continually push them to the brink of becoming vagabonds

i am certainly happy i have a free, unfettered life with a warm spring coat  
as a former official i do not pay taxes and can afford an occasional flagon of wine

murphy painfully aware of the poverty on the indian reservations  
7/8/2009 2:44 PM

von zach XIX,33

finding a bit of peace at the end of my dangerous boat trip

i take part of my rice ration and distribute it among the oarsmen  
when traveling is dangerous it pays to rely upon mutual benefit  
at this moment on the far side of the dangerous rapids  
i reward them for what they have accomplished for us all

yawning abysses were slithered through in a moment  
even though the boat sped along seemingly out of control  
when one is close to success and failure simultaneously  
one should always take care that the worst outcome does not occur

if one is aware of danger and has prudent regard for safety  
one acts as did the honored wise men in the past  
this warning should perhaps be considered for the entire empire  
i earnestly hope that the nation should not be oblivious to its dangers

murphy imagining himself the head of his clan  
7/8/2009 4:12 PM

von zach XIX,34



staying the night in cuo-shi-pu

the boatmen are tired and even though it is not late in the day  
i decide to stop at this beautiful station and enjoy the spring landscape  
but since the storms come quickly here and frequently  
we can do nothing more than anchor our boat and enjoy our surroundings

the water calms down somewhat as the evening progresses  
the sun has fallen and the stars have begun their scintillation  
the waning moon has not yet appeared with its weak light  
the wind blows out our lamp leaving us in a deep darkness

many outstanding men are suffering and miserable at this time  
in this chaotic world there is no kindness or sympathy anymore  
i am only an ordinary man continuously a victim of my carelessness  
the days trickle by and i make no progress as i slowly age

my confucian apprenticeship taught me to beware of danger  
i take solace in reading and contemplating the book of changes

murphy driven back to the pivotal lessons of his youth  
7/9/2009 8:26 AM

von zach XIX,35

i depart early in the morning

this morning i sing with joy, yet soon i will cry again  
in my long journey i must constantly be moving on  
as yesterday i remain alone on a solitary boat  
i hear the same noisy storm, the same people as before

everywhere i see birds flying, fearless in the weather, feeding  
why must only the fish be frightened hiding beneath the waves  
earlier rulers invented nets and many other methods  
the fish long ago learned to fear the wily methods of men

green water plants grow in these waters in great profusion  
but i cannot tarry alongside their beauty and must hoist sails  
the truce has not yet produced an end to the vicious rioting  
i am as fearful of the unrest as the fish are of the nets

murphy making coffee before everyone else begins to stir  
7/9/2009 10:07 AM

von zach XIX,36

i come to the jin-kou ferry crossing

the great southern mountain heng is not far from here  
there the xiang turns east and becomes ever deeper  
a friendly breeze helps the rowers along our way  
the spring sun brightens the cloud crowned peaks

after a bend in the river we pass jin-kou crossing  
from there we see dense maple forests on the banks  
white fish are caught here in specialized narrow nets  
i can hear the beautiful voices of yellow orioles

even the smaller creatures of nature have luck or misfortune  
and often men are moved to compassion when they see them suffer  
fortunately i have a jug of wine beside me for comfort  
and my lute sits on my knees, soundless for the moment

saints and decent men of the past i have known are dead now  
i am left alone with wine and music as my only consolations

murphy practicing his latest song for the upcoming gig  
7/9/2009 10:24 AM

von zach XIX,37

i come to kong-ling gorge

i am going upriver fighting through the wild waves  
while on both sides beautiful scenes pass me by  
fortunately the row boat can make only slow progress  
so i can enjoy the landscape completely at my leisure

the reddish rocks of kong-ling gorge soar skyward  
maples and conifers hide behind the rugged crags  
the green of spring brings joy here as everywhere  
and even the sun is shining which is here a rarity

i could build a house here and make a happy life  
i could remain and whistle all i want until i die  
the toxic miasmas of the south would not prevent this  
but i do fear the rioting in this wild borderland

i have passed by beautiful scenery before without enjoyment  
i am ashamed to say that i was afraid of being ridiculed by people  
but now with the boat's slow passage through gorgeous terrain  
i can loose my greedy delight in this marvelous spectacle

murphy listening to his grandmother remember her bus trips through the northwest  
7/10/2009 8:32 AM

von zach XIX,38

i stay overnight in the hua-shi fort

during lunch i passed through the kong-ling gorge  
in the evening i was able to reach the hua-shi fort  
here along beside the ancient flow of waters  
i find a jumbled forest of both mature and fresh growth

the perpetual southern winds bring a muggy warmth  
the spring days become hot even into the evening hours  
the four seasons are normally distinct in their feeling  
why is the weather here in such a confused state

this infinite world amazes with its bewildering differences  
why should i be so surprised when order and disorder alternate  
my boat is docked by an old reddish circular fort  
i stumble up a path with my cane like an old lumberjack

the heavy taxation of the people has caused the village to be deserted  
only the springs are flowing in their abandoned gardens  
although the doors of the abandoned huts are hidden by weeds  
the iron farming equipment appears still to be in good shape

over east of tai-hang mountain rebels continue to maraud  
yet the heavy burden of imperial taxes are still ruthlessly collected  
who will it be who finally knocks on the emperor's door  
to inform him of the need to reduce this unbearable burden on the people

murphy toting up the appalling results of confiscatory laws  
7/17/2009 9:05 AM

von zach XIX,39

i set off early in the morning

one hundred doubts accompany any request for help  
especially from an old sickly man such as i  
although i still have many friends and acquaintances  
i find myself continually travelling even into my dotage

asked to leave quite early the oarsmen are cranky  
the sails are hoisted but the winds are unfavorable  
wise men in the past counselled caution to avoid dangers  
so why must i be in such a rush to be under way today

the waves are thick and black while serpents leap about  
the rising sun ignites a yellowish hue within the fog  
i feel tired and suspect the miasma may be affecting me  
i stretch out on the boat and try to get some sleep

later my servant wakes me and i wash and comb my hair  
my aged locks affront me as i gaze into the mirror  
i fasten my hairpin quickly and put a cloth cap on my head  
as i gaze on the flowers of the forest i am ashamed of my appearance

i listen to the people complain about robbers who came in the night  
but i have little to fear since my pockets are quite empty  
as a result of these riots i am travelling in these alien lands  
to be ingratiating and ask for help grates on my self respect

bo-yi and shu-qi once starved themselves rather than ask for aid  
but then su-qin and zhang-yi came later and received rice and horses  
i am only a poor man and know not which example to follow  
the trouble is that i can make arguments for doing either

murphy hide-bound to make his own way  
7/18/2009 8:49 AM

von zach XIX,40

i come to the island of wan-zhou

it is a cloud bedecked, mighty, rocky island  
choppy windswept waves beat upon the shore  
this island of wan-zhou deserves its notoriety  
its rugged beauty is absolutely unusual

my boat grazes the branches to which monkeys cling  
the high waves lift me above the low flying shore birds  
the ceaseless waves make it difficult to read my books  
so i go onto the steep sandy shore for a while to pick flowers

despite the rigors of travel the beautiful scenery invigorates me  
but soon enough grief comes back to my lank decaying body  
back in the homeland of china proper, battles still rage  
how can anyone look into the future without foreboding

murphy striving as always for equanimity midst the struggle of life  
7/18/2009 9:07 AM

von zach XIX,41

i leave the moldy rocks of bo-ma-tan

the high water this spring now covers my mooring rope  
as is normal for me i leave this wilderness place at sunrise  
night finds me the same as yesterday as birds fly around  
the flowers on the shore smile at me but i pass them by

the people i meet have pity for this white haired old man  
i have been entertained steadily with wonderful wines  
but i cannot accept the generous offers by my new acquaintances  
i must drive myself further south and never come back this way

murphy maniacal in the pursuit of his goals  
7/18/2009 9:17 AM

von zach XIX,42



returning geese

i hear the geese migrate oddly this spring  
they leave guang-zhou for furthur south  
they now depart from the warm sea in the flower season  
though they came here to escape the snows of the north

the movement of these birds brings the premonition of more war  
when can an anxious ttraveler find some peace and rest  
in previous years these birds flew down in the autumn  
and they never went furthur south than dong-ting lake

murphy feeling global warming reverberate through nature  
7/18/2009 3:51 PM

von zach XIX,43

looking out over the landscape

all encompassing is the size of heaven and earth  
this powerful country recedes far, far into the distance  
mountain after mountain wreathed in billowing clouds  
the plains of the miao people endless before me

the vast forests are threatened by surging spring floods  
the rough reeds along the shore grow quickly when the ice melts away  
i am getting older and fading away on my small boat  
i will find no shining court to serve as a useful sage

murphy no longer harboring thoughts of achievement and glory  
7/18/2009 3:59 PM

von zach XIX,44

i come to qiao-kou-zhen

in the far mists of the distance lies the capital chang-an  
the way back untravellable by this old feeble traveller  
in these my older days i exist in the river and lake region  
at sunset now i am surrounded by the charms of spring

the bees are whirring through the flowering bushes and trees  
light winged swallows slip in flight to sip the mud on the shore  
jia-yi's bones have long since decayed into a fine dust  
i am close to his last place of exile and grieve over our similar fates

murphy finding parallels in all that he sees  
7/18/2009 4:12 PM

von zach XIX,45

i seek shelter from a storm in the bay at tong-guan mountain

although it is not yet evening i lower my sails  
i seek protection from a storm on the xiang river  
here now the first grass in the paddy fields are flooded  
in the spring the hillsides are cleared again by fire

as i anchor here the area is darkened by the coming storm  
i could not continue upstream now against the high waves  
a pair of white cranes fly high above me and continue on  
i can never hope to follow and catch up with them

murphy being prudent despite his inclinations  
7/19/2009 1:37 PM

von zach XIX,46

north wind

the spring brings a bad miasma here in the southern regions  
it is dispersed only by a brisk north wind  
toward evening today as the world darkens it begins  
by full darkness the whole world is shaken by it

fresh air replaces the fetor of the moist lowlands  
while the sound of the wind tears over the vast dong-ting lake  
the fish and dragons tremble under these broad waters  
the birds and beasts are awake in terror even at midnight

but i feel as if i am cleansed and look forward to further travel  
though i am worried that the boat will be harmed by the harsh winds  
after the prolonged oppressive sweltering heat of the south  
the cooling effect of the north wind is certainly desirable

now i feel my asthma has been helped by this weather  
and i feel i should tarry no longer but be on my way again  
yet i ask my oarsmen to wait again for a second night  
and while we wait out the strong winds i feel much healthier

the next morning the storm has abated and we set off  
in the bright sunshine we make good progress  
sitting in my armchair i watch the wind filled sails  
as the cloud wreathed hills cheerily pass me by

murphy always game for an adventure  
7/19/2009 5:11 PM

von zach XIX,47

my feelings (1 of 2)

in life it is of great consequence where a man is born  
the sky above reflects down his individual talents  
as a young man he must prepare himself to be of service  
when he attains officialdom he must ably discharge his obligations

unfortunately my entire life has been filled with frustrations  
even into my older years i am dogged by difficulties and dangers  
for it was my lot to be living when an-lu-shan brought his distress to the throne  
and countless disloyal minds decided to flock to his side

the huang-he and lo-shui rivers ran red with blood  
the high nobility wept bitter tears along the road side  
even the capital in chang-an fell into his hands  
the imperial coach of state forced to flee into the dust of the roads

the entire nation was made to weep as do small children  
for both our emperor's were made to abandon their palace  
since then almost twenty four years have passed  
and all during this time the country has been torn by riots

our dynasty renewed itself under emperor dai-zong  
but it has not achieved the eminence of the zheng-guan period  
now the state income is used to meet the needs of the army  
the highest ministers concentrate their efforts on raising more and more taxes

even men of high standing are rebuked for their failure  
who can possibly take the chance to help the people  
especially such a decrepit old man as i who wishes to help  
his views are disregarded even before they might have been offered

the former emperor recognized this problem and took blame upon himself  
but the current leader has not done so which bothers me considerably  
and of course the years do not wait for me or any man  
and i am hampered by my illnesses as the time for action flees

at night i imagine myself rising righteously with my sword  
i, the avenging dragon, emerging from my seclusion in the pond  
but i am, alas, too aware of the ravages of my age  
and must make do with the verity contained within my brush

murphy opening his romantic heart to the possibility of total rejection  
7/27/2009 1:15 PM

von zach XIX,48

my feelings (2 of 2)

the country is in danger and all the success of the past is crumbling  
i am grief stricken, filled with longing for the time of great sovereigns  
i am stuck sailing far from home on the xiang river  
at dusk i search in vain for the tomb of emperor shun-wu

i am a fish in his deep hiding hole who refuses to bite  
i am an escaping deer who never looks back as he flees  
my heart when young was full of love and freedom  
now i am severely twisted into an embittered old man

i am driven solely now by my need of food and clothing  
so i constantly seek prospective new friends in these distant places  
i have struggled my way through the wind and waves of spring  
for a hundred miles up this forest-lined sandy river

on the trip upstream there were only a few pleasant days  
the date of the qing-ming party i usually celebrate has now passed  
i abandoned my house in the old country to rot and decay  
and have pushed my oarsmen to take many uncertain trips

in addition to the miseries which afflict the aging man  
i have been hindered by everyday trivial necessities  
everyone must eventually die and pass into the darkness of eternity  
why bother to seek fame as an official to put a name on a grave

i am truly saddened never to have found the fabled peach blossoms spring  
here because of my stupidity i stick to my plan of going ever more south  
i have come to accept the toxic miasma of the approaching hot season  
as i have begun to neglect the dangers of traveling in the lake district

tigers and wolves are chewing on the central section of the empire  
that is why i persist in my evermore southerly journey  
go-hong and xu-jing were forced to flee in ancient times  
and their destinations were the same as mine today

though i cannot hope to match these men in wisdom  
i too became a vagabond drifting about in the southern lakes  
i still lose weight and cannot gain it back, how can i continue to travel  
i now lose consciousness while undergoing acupuncture and moxabustion

because of the slowness of my journey the servants have become lazy  
they complain constantly about my need to interrupt the travel for rest  
my hope is once again to be able to hoist the sail and be on the way  
but it is as always difficult to tell the will of heaven in these matters

i would like to reach the far south where the giant mountains rise  
there i believe i could force myself to rise up once again  
i would look out in friendship on the old polar star  
i might even try to stretch my legs to the top of the southern peaks

murphy never knowing when it is time to give it up and quit for a while  
7/28/2009 10:51 AM

von zach XIX,49



looking up at the giant mountain heng-shan

the giant mountain here lies under the red bird constellation  
it has always been revered by hundreds of princes through the ages  
it brings the miraculous breath of life as its force on earth  
with its mighty presence it overlooks half the southern regions

the different dynasties' sacrificial ceremonies have honored its influence  
but each ruled by their own virtue not through the incense of the prayers  
how quiet it has now become since the ceremonial processions in the past  
emperor shun who sacrificed here has long ago left this earth

the entanglements of the world have thwarted my ambitions  
so i have undertaken this long journey on the xiao and xiang rivers  
as the thirsty sun bursts over the steep mountain walls  
my boat rocks gently in the purity of sunlit waves

the zhu-rong tip juts above the other salient points  
the other peaks follow in heights lower this top face  
only the zi-gai top which is broken away rivals the zhu-rong  
and peers over at her with a similar looming power

i respectfully report what i have heard of wei-hua-tun  
this daughter of wei-shu is said to fly here surrounded by immortals  
but now there appear in the air surrounding the five peaks  
rapidly advancing clouds bringing snow to their majestic heights

because of my poor health and the rigors of my journey  
i fear i have not the energy needed to climb onto the mountain  
when i return here i wish to order a palanquin to carry me  
i wish to perform my ablutions at the fabled palace of the immortals

there i will invoke the god of this heng-shan with three ritual three sighs  
asking for his help in finally restoring our empire to its glory  
although the degenerate morals of our time have forgotten proper sacrifice  
i ask the great god of the mountain to bestow blessings on the country

murphy shredding sacred tobacco into the wind  
7/29/2009 8:07 AM

von xach XIX,50

festival day (1 of 2)

this morning the new smoke arose from the new fires  
during the han-shi festival kindling was forbidden  
i look out on the colors of the lake and the splendor of spring  
my boat is a stranger in this land at the time of the festival

the birds are afire with color carrying flowers in their beaks  
they are certainly content with their lot in this time of birth  
the children are flush from their riding around on bamboo horses  
alas i have grown too old for that sort of pleasure

the dress of the barbarian boys is of their finest  
they are not always so well groomed as they are for today  
the narrow waists of the girls of chu are also beguiling  
it is a treat to see the natives celebrating in their happiness

i note that the old town square is no longer to be found here  
and with it gone the fame of the han prince liu-fa has also faded  
the house well of jia-yi, counselor of the prince of chang-sha, is said to still exist  
and i have always wished to see the remains of this famous house

the local people here endure a month long fast in their celebration  
that is too much for me in my old age though i normally eat less these days  
because i have no money to buy meat for my meals  
i am tempted to earn money like yan-zun by telling fortunes

but i cannot see the future, though i do note differences  
between the people from the town and those from the forests  
i spend my days now eating coarse rice and drinking dull wine  
i have become more like the hermits come fresh into town

murphy on the outside looking in  
7/29/2009 11:19 AM

von zach XIX,51

festival day (2 of 2)

my physical body continues to wander west then east  
while i am unable to move my right arm and am half deaf  
i am alone and restricted to this ship, tears fall from my eyes  
i am seriously ill and write in the air with my left hand like yin-hao

for ten years now i celebrate festival day watching my children play ball  
the local custom is the same as that thousands of miles away  
at this time wild geese fly into the heavens to return to the great wall  
here they use green maple wood instead of willow to make our ritual fire

back in chang-an the palaces are now surrounded by lush flowers  
the mountains and rivers there burst with color like embroidered carpets  
here the wind swept dong-ting lake is swollen with spring runoff  
i am saddened by the white chestnuts reminding me of white-haired old age

murphy going through the motions  
7/30/2009 7:37 AM

von zach XIX,52

a guest from the south

a guest visited me from the southern seas  
he gave me some pearls called mermaid tears  
there were strange cloudy characters on the pearls  
i wanted to decipher them but found i could not

i then put them away in my suitcase  
i wanted to save them for use when the tax man came  
now though when i opened the box they had turned to blood  
my regret is simple, i have nothing now with which to pay my taxes

murphy without a prayer of catching a break  
7/30/2009 7:48 AM

von zach XIX,53

i leave tan-zhou

last night i celebrated long with a delightful chang-sha wine  
this morning i again make my way on the spring swollen xiang river  
blossoms from the shore plants fly through the air to give me escort  
the swallows flit around the mast and beguile me with their twittering

no one can hope to match jia-yi, counselor to the prince of chang-sha  
nor attain the beauty of the writing of zhu-sui-liang governor of tan-zhou  
the first in the han, the second in the tang achieved high fame  
i am thinking of them this morning and my wasted life saddens me

murphy so old and decrepit everything turns to remorse  
7/30/2009 8:02 AM

von zach XIX,54

shuang-feng-pu, the landing place by the two maple trees

i moor my boat at the place named for two maple trees  
both have long since collapsed but their logs remain  
i myself have seen a precipitous decline in my strength  
who would have thought two such sturdy trees would ever fall

the waves are so high they threaten to wash over me and take my gauze cap  
one must strip the moss from the trunks of those trees to use as a raft  
i would like to ask for them from the owner of the land where they lie  
so i could make a raft and return home like once zhang-qian rose into the sky

murphy the victim of a rambling decrepit mind  
7/30/2009 9:36 AM

von zach XIX,55

i send a poem in reciprocation to judge guo-shou, fifteenth of his clan

i am a victim of limited talents and senile decay  
but i still enjoy an undeserved reputation among a few  
i have lain sick abed in this area of rivers and lakes  
while spring renews and invigorates the land

because of my illness i think mostly about my medicines  
and have completely abandoned any efforts at poetry  
only now when i begin to feel i can blossom flowers again  
i receive, as in the past, some verses from a dear friend

my verses remind one of the useless pebbles of the kingdom of yan  
and my ability compares to the useless rocks in the meteor shower of the zuo-zhuan  
but your lines shine like the pearls of the duke of sui illuminating the night  
and since i received them my nights have seemed much more cheerful

the wind-whipped waves hasten past qiao-kou the island of oranges  
they remind of the speed with which you sailed from here toward chang-sha  
why didn't you moor your little sailboat here for a bit longer  
and we could have talked together and shared our poetry

murphy grasping at any sign of warmth and pleasure  
7/30/2009 10:04 AM

von zach XIX,56

in heng-zhou i escort my old friend head censor li-mian as he leaves for canton

you came with your insignia of rank from the highest heaven  
your official barge floats proudly across the expanse of dong-ting lake  
you are the north wind bringing fresh breezes from chang-an  
the rebels of the south will give way to you and your brilliance

by day and by night i languish here like a bird trapped in a cage  
between heaven and earth i am but duckweed floating on water  
you are my old friend come as an elder from the imperial house  
you behold here a floating thistle-down grown old and decrepit

murphy sitting on the sidelines while the game is played by others  
8/3/2009 8:00 AM

von zach XIX,57



i wish to leave heng-zhou and return to xiang-yang

when younger i tried to accept my lot in life as predestined  
and feared to follow my own heartfelt desires, but no longer  
life is a result of fully accepting consequences of actions  
i have spent too many years now searching for food far from home

streams and lakes around the giant heng mountain are difficult  
there is a great deal of malaria along the zheng-xiang river  
i have become a useless person begging here and there for my food  
living thus in foreign lands i stand ashamed before worthy men of the past

why should i think to brush the dust off my head scarf  
why, when only empty wine jugs pile up on my boat  
the muggy heat exacerbates my feeble attempts at keeping clean  
torrential rains constantly assault the feebleness of my body

when i make rice to eat water-mallow soup makes it easier to swallow  
i spend the entirety of my idle days drinking cup after cup of tea  
i long for the relative cleanliness of the han river in xiang-yang  
i remember the refreshing coolness at the summit of xian mountain

when traveling downstream one can use the current to advantage  
but when turning back north one must use sails to catch the winds  
still today the stone tablet of my forefather du yu stands on mount xian  
as also still sits the well of the famous author wang-can

there in xiang-yang i want to spend my old age in a chair with my cane  
i will build myself a small reed hut for necessary shelter  
as i have before i will take joy in watering a small garden  
and i will live out my days in peace as once did liu-hui-fei on guang mountain

there i can life as a fisherman in harmony with my inclinations  
i will not need to hunger for fame as once did lu-zheng-lian  
i ask these long suffering oarsmen to take me back to the north  
to begin now in the hot summer to go to the cold waters of xiang-yang

murphy saving it all up for last go-round  
8/5/2009 8:31 AM

von zach XIX,58

on the xiang river a farewell feast is given the censor pei as he leaves for dao-zhou

a bright sun falls on the escort boat and the official party  
the fluttering red flags enliven the festivities on the broad river  
ranking officials bid the new governor of dao-zhou farewell  
they approach the ceremonial mats with a well-ordered dignity

even i, though unworthy, have received a gracious invitation  
since i have expressed admiration for him from my earliest youth  
our relationship is, as it were, that of blood brothers  
and i can freely express all my feelings toward him

he has become famous as a result of his many successes  
while i stand before him talentless and ashamed  
yet his feelings for me have not changed though i have had misfortune  
our relationship has the strength of metal or stone

my thick-headedness is even greater than the lesser writers  
but in his presence i become in good measure reborn  
unfortunately our time together will be curtailed  
the joy of reunion quickly followed by the grief of separation

most of our old friends have disappeared as if taken by the wind  
the past lies ever more distant, ever more hazy  
i am drawn to the drinking by my hundreds of worries  
and while i wish to show a stoic face, tears gush forth

muggy clouds gather within a dark night sky  
masking the arrival of the waning moon  
in this heat my white fan is soon broken from overuse  
long billows of smoke rise from the mass of colored candles

the cang-guo and he-tan birds sing to the rise of the morning star  
at this time i take my leave and return again to my boat  
my parting wish is for him to reduce the military in his district  
and to promote widely the resumption of agriculture

and i trust he will remember the old man ill from diabetes  
and send me letters to the top of the high mountain where i wish to be

murphy dutifully keeping up appearances  
8/5/2009 10:52 AM

von zach XIX,59

respectfully i give this poem to wang-qin, prefect of ying-zhou, as he returns to the north

the emperor's court has ordered two separate things to be done  
crush the robbers and rebels, and show compassion for the common people  
to accomplish this the emperor chose from a splendid group of officials  
and decided that you would become the prefect of ying-zhou

it has been a heavy worry of the emperor for some time now  
to alleviate the heavy burden of the people and see to their needs  
since your appointment smoke again rises from the houses in your district  
the wounds of the people have stopped bleeding and begun to heal

only in your district near the sea can one hear happy songs  
and triumphant trumpet calls come down from the mountain fortresses  
i am now only a white haired old man whose habit is to retire early  
the young farmers though are diligent and once fallow land is now producing

your official duties over, now people kneel before your carriage as you return  
yet you sent out a rider to fetch me like once liu-tan searched for zhang-ping  
you have no need to seek me out for any official matter  
so i ask myself how can i repay the kindness you have shown me

dust piles up on the paintbrush of our earlier colleagues, the censors  
during these long years of misery my black sable has lost its luster  
your special friendship shall remain with me until my end  
though your example of high confucian ethics now leaves me for good

we must separate like the rain separates from the clouds  
our future lives spreading apart in the vaults of heaven  
even now as the birds groan in the heat of the forest  
and the fish shake their heads in the depths of their pools

although many rebels in the north pledge themselves again to the emperor  
i like si-ma-tan have chosen to remain here in the south  
troop movements must be minimized as much as possible  
yet all the lands of the emperor must be retaken and brought to peace

i trust you will still be able to give the emperor your sage advice  
how civility must be shown to the foreign people in the eight areas of action  
i look forward with growing hope to hear the decisions of the dynasty  
fully confident that the crown will bestow honor on the ancestral temple

you my old friend will carry with you your innately proper being  
while i remain here in the distant borderland with my worries receding  
i would like to see another government like that of emperor yao  
where i could wander freely forever within a joyous population

murphy connected to the old boy's network still  
8/5/2009 5:42 PM

von zach XIX,60

i mourn the death of chief censor wei-zhi-jin

i remember with melancholy xun-xia in the land of jin  
i enjoyed your friendship there in our younger years  
there i recieved undeservedly your gracious attention  
and blossomed under your thorough tutelage of the classics

your official offices were originally in the imperial city  
then at the end you were resplendent as the governor of hu-nan  
you richly deserved the high dignity of this position  
you always stood out from the midst of our colleagues

i followed your career closely though from afar  
i was unfortunately separated from your voice and face  
i came to hu-nan to see you but to my horror you had died  
when i think of our earlier friendship in the north i weep continuously

you died in chang-sha where once jia-yi received a portent of his death  
your were truly loved and honored by all the people in hu-nan  
i will be at your funeral weeping most bitterly as did fan-shi for zhang-guo  
i will place a suitable sword near your grave as ji-zha did for the prince of xu

it is fortunate that now the tang dynasty has begun to blossom anew  
your son has your abilities and should follow you into positions of dignity  
he carries himself with the same graceful harmony as you did  
and will surely stride through his future times as a worthy imperial servant

it is now just at the height of summer in chang-sha  
the streams and the lakes show their beauty in the fair weather  
now your marvelous house among the trees is closed  
funeral flags fly high over the hall where your coffin sits

curtains in the hall move as though swallows fly through in the wind  
flutes sound a quicker pace and more sadly than the evening cicadas  
all the joy of life has stopped in your abandoned house  
you will never again visit my boat as once liu-tan visited zhang-ping

now it seems as if all the friends of my youth have already died  
and i am left alone worrying about the cost of living in chang-sha  
since i have become old and feeble i find myself often in tears  
the pain and shock of your death has prompted me to write these verses

who will be able to match your administration of this part of the empire  
the court of officials are reluctant to appoint a general to follow you  
the final judgement of history will praise you for your service  
the talent you personified led you to a just and lasting fame

murphy the old man melting away in the summer heat  
8/10/2009 9:35 AM

von zach XIX,61

sick in the tower in a riverside apartment at chang-sha, i send these verses to censors cui and lu

the kitchen of an itinerant is poorly equipped  
but the bed in this tower is pleasantly fresh  
the illness of my old age has made me a stick manikin  
while on these long summer days thoughts turn to the generosity of friends

i look forward to the smooth taste of steamed rice  
and savor the subtle aroma of water-lily soup  
these dishes are soothing and bring warmth to the stomach  
perhaps either of you might send the makings for a few such bowls

murphy concentrating more and more on the immediate present  
8/10/2009 11:00 AM

von zach XIX,62

in chang-sha i give this poem to ministerial secretary wei-tiao as he leaves for shao-zhou

you are now appointed the prefect of shao-zhou on the hot southern sea  
before this you were ministerial secretary in the offices of the imperial city  
the emperor has offered you an office fit for your exceptional talents  
because i was your colleague earlier in life i also bask in your radiance

my hair is white and growing more sparse in my illness of old age  
the time of autumn has returned and the cold last night affected me  
the wild geese do not fly farther south than the dong-ting lake  
thus you shouldn't expect my letters, but please send me news of your doings

murphy settling for the life of a spectator  
8/10/2009 11:12 AM

von zach XIX,63



i answer a poem that prefect wei-tiao has sent

i remain in my simple seclusion in the land of rivers and lakes  
the emperor's court no longer has a memory of my being  
i am thus abashed that you chose to come visit me  
and i have received many of your wonderful letters

my wispy white hair does not comb properly these days  
your new poems, however, have the intricate sheen of brocade  
although the wild geese still do not carry letters farther south than here  
i am grateful to the fish that swim north carrying your felicitous phrases

murphy occasionally able to do the properly civil thing  
8/10/2009 11:23 AM

von zach XIX,64

up in the tower

i am stuck up here between heaven and earth  
scratching my head, fiddling with my white jade hatpin  
the sedan chair of the emperor remains far, far to the north  
while my health declines here south of dong-ting lake

a longing for the palace torments my liver and lungs  
yet i know my timber is not up to serving any useful purpose  
driven here by the unrest i have been unable to sustain myself  
i will end my days here on the banks of the xiao and the xiang

murphy ready to give up the ghost  
8/10/2009 11:31 AM

von zach XIX,65