

passing thoughts captured

poetry has been with us since the ancient times
its worth is immediately recognized by an open heart
different poets display individual strengths
those who become famous are truly worthy of the honor

now one doesn't hear the style of qu-yuan and song-yu
for the art of poetry changed remarkably in the han dynasty
the poets of the wei dynasty further decorated and beautified
all culminating in the luxuriant rhetoric of the six dynasties

then during the early tang time the old models began to reappear
every age tends to modify what came before and find its unique special style
i was raised within the style of the poets within my own learned family
and since my earliest youth i have felt at home within its boundaries

but i also dealt with the outstanding creations of the giang-su school
and even, despite the frustrations involved, with the poetries of the he-nan
the giang-su were all splendid examples of racing horses
whereas the sons of cao-cao in he-nan excelled in individual ways

though i have become skilled myself as a poet, but like the wagon maker of chuang-ce
it grieves me that i have been unable to extend my art to my children
i have done nothing else in my loneliness than to write poems
but they were not understood by my children nor taken up and copied

by giving voice to my feelings i consoled myself over my endless travels
because of my illnesses i have had to change my place of residence ceaselessly
i am ashamed of my inability to help shape policy for the state and the people
all i have been able to do is to search like a bird for a branch to perch upon

in the wilderness during the riots the robbers swarmed like wasps and scorpions
here in the gorges of the yang-zi i am surrounded by dragons and crocodiles
sadly modern times are as far away from peace as were emperors yao and shun
the rioting continues without cease as once xiang-yu fought for years with liu-bang

the marvelous court of emperor tang-ming-huang was disturbed by robbers and rebels
but the riots i had to suffer in the foreign lands were much tougher
now i am buried like the sword in prison which wants to send its rays to the stars
i sit unhappy like the dragons in a deep blue pond waiting for the rain in order to surface

in cheng-du-fu where once independent headquarters were established
and indeed everywhere in the world the flags of war fly over thousands of armed men
even in the south in an-nam the authority of the government is threatened
in the north the people have become threatened by the barbarian turfan

i am shut off from news of the motherland, even magpies and ravens do not appear
and i am constantly outraged by the roaring of the beasts who keep them from coming
i spend my time growing food to eat and writing my poetry
i have become inured to the rhythm of the people in this country

but in my imaginings i leave kui-zhou for the white pavilion in the capital
before the clear waters of autumn here i think of lake huang-zi-bei in chang-an
i cannot really say i admire this poem as it ends
but grief overcame me and i sang of my separation from my homeland

murphy wearing his heart on his sleeve
10/8/2008 3:17 PM

von zach XV,1

a family member du-chong-jian

i have a revered grandnephew in my family
he is easy in his manner as were the people of antiquity
he contents himself with keeping up his fields and his structures
he presents himself in society and does not retire as a hermit

it is his habit to rise early and address himself to what needs being done
because he wishes the empire to prosper he concentrates on a good harvest
he keeps his political opinions to himself when in company
though one can certainly discern from his statements a learned intellect

murphy visiting the kinfolks back in texas and eating their barbecue
10/8/2008 3:51 PM

von zach XV,2

my fifth younger brother du-feng lives alone in the eastern district of giang-nan. i have not heard from him in three or four years and will search for a messenger who can take him these two poems.
(1 of 2)

i have remained in this life unhappily since the end of the rioting
from my involuntary place of residence i feel you are in difficulties
when the grass dries up even the most warlike steed starves
and on an evening sand bank this lonesome wagtail feels cold

i live in kui-zhou near the ruined fortress bo-di-cheng
you live within the wide water masses which issue from the land of wu
i have been crying from morning til night for ten years
the ragged sleeves of my garments never become dry

murphy letting his hair down to his next of kin
10/9/2008 10:50 AM

von zach XV,3

my fifth younger brother du-feng lives alone in the eastern district of giang-nan. i have not heard from him in three or four years and will search for a messenger who can take him these two poems.
(2 of 2)

i have heard that you have moved back into the mountains
and now stay in the cloister at either yang-zhou or yue-zhou
our long separation has brought us both the dust of war
even the chill of autumn in kui-zhou has not brought me joy this year

my body sits here beside a tree listening to the cries of the monkeys
while my soul floats above the coast rich in mirages where you live
next year i plan to ride the spring floods down into the rich homelands
i will continue to the far eastern area to visit you there up among the white clouds

murphy clinging steadfast to his dreams
10/9/2008 11:00 AM

von zach XV,4

i give a farewell verse to my younger friend, general tian (fourth of his clan) as he travels to jiang-ling by order of the chief censor

the heavy drinking of the farewell party has begun to wind down
the boat of the general is ready to leave its cold mooring place
the general turns back to look at the censor whose message he carries
his plan is to travel as fast as he can to reach prince wei in jiang-ling

the swallows of late autumn leave the maple woods of yang-zi
the wild geese fly south when the hard frosts first come
when you become absolutely drunk on the fine wines of prince wei
rest assured that my good feelings cross a distance to share in your joy

murphy left behind at the pier once too often
10/9/2008 11:22 AM

von zach XV,5

casting off dejection, twelve poems (1 of 12)

in kui-zhou the huts are scattered like the stars
they stand behind rough gated hedges with thatch roofs
just now a rain squall passes over my poor hut
over the darkness of the waves of the rolling stream

a mountain bird feeds nearby with its young
red berries proliferate on the surrounding bushes
a barbarian girl of wu-xi accepts a few coins
then leaves behind her catch of plump white fish

murphy adopting the ways of his new neighborhood
10/10/2008 10:10 AM

von zach XV,6

casting off dejection, twelve poems (2 of 12)

an itinerant merchant from turkestan takes his leave
he is on his way toward the town of yang-zhou
he has spoken of his life there as a young man
climbing the old tower of the post station in xi-ling

i ask him to inquire about the price of rice in that region
i wonder if it is expensive or affordable for me
even though i am growing old and more feeble
i would like to travel to the east as soon i am more able

murphy refusing to give up his dreams of the future
10/10/2008 10:18 AM

von zach XV,7

casting off dejection, twelve poems (3 of 12)

i have long been separated from my native country
i remember saying my goodbyes ten full years in the past
and every autumn since when melons ripen in the fields
my thoughts return to the old hills of my ancestral home

i remember especially the man of the melon village
who picked ferns on the southern lake by jiang-ling
would i could bring this old friend, zheng-shen,
the hermit of gua-zhou-cun, all the way here to me

murphy waiting for the world to find the path to his door
10/10/2008 10:29 AM

von zach XV,8

casting off dejection, twelve poems (4 of 12)

he-xun from the ministry of waters was already influential in his youth
the two distinguished poets shen-yo and fan-yun emulated his methods
my friend xie-ju from the same ministry has a distinctive style
cao-zhi and liu-zheng, though long dead now, would have treasured him

even i am fond of the verses written by xie-ju
“once when i was an official i founded a new school of poetry
now i have decided to travel along the cang-lang river
and become a hermit, an old fisherman, like chu-ci“

murphy reading a novel of the pre-contact cherokee town keetoowah
10/10/2008 11:05 AM

von zach XV,9

casting off dejection, twelve poems (5 of 12)

my models of poetry have been li-ling and su-wu
meng-yun-qing is now a great teacher of poetic technique
and since even he speaks well of my two models
i have no regrets for having chosen them

of course if one is to concentrate on a single meal
one does not invite the ordinary people as guests
and meng's poetry has many examples of excellence
many reaching the standards of li-ling and su-wu

murphy deciding which poetry seminar to grace with his presence
10/10/2008 11:16 AM

von zach XV,10

casting off dejection, twelve poems (6 of 12)

and once again i am reminded of meng-hao-ran
the renowned poet born in xiang-yang
every poem he has ever written
will be read again and again in future times

now even the contemporaries of the late meng
have ceased to build new ideas using his model
and they look in vain for equivalent strengths
when they revisit the wisdoms of his beautiful verse

murphy standing with his back to the wall as his mother measures his height
10/10/2008 1:36 PM

von zach XV,11

casting off dejection, twelve poems (7 of 12)

if it were not for poetry i despair of training my mind
it frees me to begin the comtemplation of my disposition
when i finish a new poem i take a deep breath
then i sing the words slowly to myself and feel their pulse

xie-ling-yun and xie-hui-lian well understood this process
they coincide with my ideas and the areas of my skills
as opposed to my becoming like yin-ken and he-xun
that requires an enormous effort on my part

murphy sorting the opposition to pick off the least capable first
10/10/2008 2:51 PM

von zach XV,12

casting off dejection, twelve poems (8 of 12)

the esteemed vice-president wang wei is no more
he has left us behind in this tumultuous world
the mountains and gorges of his estate wang-quan
are now becoming overgrown with creeping ivy

many of his most popular verses are sung
they sometimes seem to fill the whole world
and his family carries on in his great tradition
his brother wang-jin displays excellent skills as a state minister

murphy recognizing genius where he finds it
10/11/2008 9:48 AM

von zach XV,13

casting off dejection, twelve poems (9 of 12)

the earlier emperor tang-ming-huang and his beloved yang-kui-fei
both have now entered the quiet night of their graves
nevertheless her favorite fruit, the li-zhi
continues in season to be brought into chang-an

often these fruit are the especial treats offered
after ritual cherry time honoring the forefathers
might not the emperor dai-zong be saddened
as he gazes upon the dew-bedecked white globes

murphy eating salt pork and blackeyed peas for new year's celebration as his grandmother did
10/11/2008 9:59 AM

von zach XV,14

casting off dejection, twelve poems (10 of 12)

i remeber when i was in the districts lu and rong
picking li-zhi fruit while i was in si-chuan
the fruit hid under the dark shade of maple trees
or sometimes shone on the sides of sinuous rocky paths

when they finally arrive at chang-an they are pale
they have already lost their color and their taste
but when they are still red and fresh in si-chuan
they have a marvelous smell and a deep delicious taste

murphy shopping at the korean market for the best fruit and vegetables
11.10.2008 10:09

von zach XV,15

casting off dejection, twelve poems (11 of 12)

in the summer one wishes to serve fruit that is chilled
so green melons and light green plums are sunk in the well
the red pears and red grapes mature in the chill of autumn
and are served regularly into the winter months

it is regrettable that these fruits are not valued as much as the li-zhi
although they grow among similar branches and tendrils
the great value that is placed on the rarity of the li-zhi
is because it has to be imported from such a long distance

murphy picking up a small stone in alaska to bring home to his granddaughter
10/11/2008

von zach XV,16

casting off dejection, twelve poems (12 of 12)

li zhi fruits grow wild in the mountains of si-chuan
they are often found along the riversides
because they are not native to the emperor's palace area
they are highly valued there and kept in jade vases

high in the mountains the age-ridden hermits die
unknown by the officials of the emperor
people are made to labor mightily, horses bear heavy loads
all for the satisfaction of a beloved woman

murphy picking out the best chocolate for valentine's day
10/11/2008 12:17 PM

von zach XV,17

grievance for the death of wang-lung, governor of peng-zhou

my good friend suddenly crossed to the other side
you writer's voice has now become cold and still
you brought a new vigor into poetry like shen-yo and xie-ling-yun
your character was different and distinct like zhi-song or wang-zi-qiao

like cao-cao you were chosen young as commander of the palace guard
like wang-xi-zhi you became a son-in-law of a member of the imperial house
your sword hilt became wrapped with writhing dragons
when you brought your flute to music the phoenix appeared

you donned many different regalias within your long service at court
as you approached the middle strength of your life the an-lu-shan rebellion broke out
the noisy clash of weapons penetrated to the imperial city
in your protracted duties you served three emperors, xuan-zong, su-zong, and dai-zong

your posting to si-chuan along the shore of the big river was difficult
because of the remoteness and difficulty of the terrain
you had carried the tortoise seal as censor so long green moss grew on it
when you wished to warn the emperor the vastness of distance made this impossible

soon after you were impressed by yan-wu when he came to si-chuan as general in charge
i was a bit ashamed to be elevated to serve in his headquarters along with you
the general looked to the weather as portent of the outcome of battle
his courageous warriors withstood the whirlwind of the barbarians advance

afterwards the waters of the well became more calm and pure
and although the watchtowers were still manned no more fires were lit
you presented yan wu with plans you had carefully thought through
you talked to him at the strategy table for an entire day

now of a sudden two columns of green rock stand before your grave
like a spruce outlasting the cold you have died in your old age
how presumptive of me to dedicate these verses to you
yet i now seize the paint brush and deplore your death

i will cry again when your coffin passes kui-zhou on your funerary boat
your soul having been freed from the body now walks in freedom
in peng-zhou your death was like a splitting of a precious stone
your body now floats like a waterchestnut on its way to the native country

i imagine in my mind your sons hurrying down the street like sky horses
the bridge above the milky way now blurs as your soul ascends
the mind of your wife who has now left this world surely waits for you there
your sons are still alive and your life is a luminous model for them to follow

in the gorges of the yang-zi rain and dark clouds are the rule
chang-an lies near the sign of the northern bushel and is predominantly clear
while i sit here with my hair turning ever more white like feng tang's
your wish to return to chang-an becomes every day ever more true

murphy watching death finalize his friend's dreams

10/11/2008 3:41 PM

von zach XV,18

the sunken ship, two poems (1 of 2)

in the first morning hour the ship fell into a grinding whirlpool in the yang-zi gorges
it was bringing the autumn tribute to chang-an from the province of hu-nan
the loaded cinnabar fell into the water as meteors fall from the sky
the king fisher feathers slipped swiftly under the roiling waves

the imperial commissioner was seen as he disappeared in the waters
the dragon's apartments now hold the treasures under the high floods
the rowers fortunately were able to escape drowning
after they bobbed to the surface they swam like gulls nimbly to the shore

murphy reading the morning paper to find out what happened yesterday
10/11/2008 4:02 PM

von zach XV,19

the sunken ship, two poems (2 of 2)

the emperor often visits the bamboo palace to show his reverence for the geniuses
he also is seen in the cassia court piously awaiting the visits of the immortals
and just as the wonder of sun's dawning illuminated the palace
the cinnabar tribute sank into the waves of the stream

it is pointless to mourn the sword of zi-fei lost to the dragon's lair
and there is no hope of using the burning rhinoceros horn to examine the deeps
the imperial commissioner sadly lost his life midst the beautiful autumnal scenery
but rose to become one with the immortal minds with the help of the elixir of life

murphy eschewing the preacher's roseate description of the glorious hereafter
10/11/2008 4:17 PM

von zach XV,20

the entrance to the yang-zi gorges, two poems (1 of2)

xia-kou lies at the entrance to the yang-zi gorges
it faces the area of the many barbarians of the southwest
the old fortress of bo-di-cheng has slanted white parapets
the precipitous walls of the gorges are surrounded by green mountains

this opening formed by the river lies at a natural strategical point
this one fortress protects all china from incursions from the southwest
now i hear again the horns and drums of a penetrating enemy
the cool autumn air brushes my wizened face, reinforces my sadness

murphy the old nomad on the move
10/13/2008 9:32 AM

von zach XV,21

the entrance to the yang-zi gorges, two poems (2 of2)

in times of peace a fortress loses its sense of purpose
when war comes it is quickly filled with a thousand lances
the rule of liu-bei in si-chuan lies in the far distant past
as does the foolish intention of gung-sun to establish an empire there

i, this stranger, tarry late into the evening among the flowering reeds
from deep within the maples the monkeys suddenly cry out
in my old age i have become a burden to family and friends
and am forced to rely upon the handouts of the governor for my livelihood

murphy the homeless septuagenarian
10/13/2008 9:49 AM

von zach XV,22

autumn wind, two poems (1 of 2)

the cold autumn wind sweeps down from the wu mountains
work is progressing in mending the forts at shang-lao and xia-lao
the ships of si-chuan are pulled upstream with the help of long ropes
during the hot season they went to cheng-du-fu and have not yet returned

when will the fighting for these strategic gorges come to an end
war on the western border of china, the turfán to the north, the bo-man to the south
unfavorable reports have also arrived from the midlands of ba
during the night we hear the sound of war drums up in the mountain fortresses

murphy cursed with living in interesting times
10/13/2008 10:04 AM

von zach XV,23

autumn wind, two poems (2 of 2)

the autumn winds blows, billowing under my loose garments
far beyond the east flowing stream the sink sinks slowly in the west
under a clear night sky one hears the slap of clothes pounded on washing stones
only a few people can be seen on the narrow paths along the ancient rocks

i wonder for whom the moon has brought such a marvelous light
it will not last long and soon i must launch my lonely yacht to sail to the homelands
then i will be able to lean my white head against the old tree in my courtyard again
i wonder whether the pond in my old garden is still there in its quietude

murphy letting his hopes get the better of himself
10/13/2008 10:20 AM

von zach XV,24

the west tower in kui-zhou, two poems (1 of 2)

the trees of wu mountain start to shed their leaves
the only green which remains comes from the spruce
the various birds communicate with their calls
a lonely cloud meanders across the sky

i look out the high windows of the tower to see the river
the steep cliffs of the gorge are strategically important
although the emperor has asked for my service
i must remain here as a hermit of sad songs

my youth was unfortunately without fame or reward
now as an old man i renounce all claims to renown
i have no complaints with the world as i finish
i merely have an everlasting longing for my homeland

murphy walking the well-trod trails of his youth

von zach XV,25

the west tower in kui-zhou, two poems (2 of 2)

my weary heart is like the floods of the big river in its yearning
day and night it strives to push on to the island of the immortals in the eastern sea
it is not that i would think poorly of an official's position if offered
it is that with my age and white hair how could i take it on

everywhere i walk these days the green fields are beginning to wither
overcome by sadness i lean against the balustrade of the red tower
when will i be able to quit worrying about the marriage of my children
how can my mind find peace when i am so afflicted by diabetes

and what of success and fame, they no longer concern me
i am more interested in the elixir of life and being lifted into that other world
my poetry has exhausted my lifelong interest in human affairs
i now wish to visit the land of the immortals to find new impressions and inspirations

murphy at least entertaining the idea that religiosity might pertain
10/14/2008 9:55 AM

von zach XV,26

celebrating the harvest festival, two poems (1 of 2)

the office of the agricultural ministry can celebrate its success
the numerous sacrificial actions have led to the earth pouring forth abundance
the appropriate festival brings the spirits among the people
to fulfill the purpose of the sacrifice and take pleasure in the incense

barbarian music surrounds me as i become a drunken old man in the south
i am cut off from timely news of the northern native country
today i am reminded of the tale of dong-fang-suo at a similar festival
though i can't hurry home with a piece of sacrificial meat from the emperor's palace

murphy in a nursing home in the country without his morning papers
10/14/2008 10:17 AM

von zach XV,27

celebrating the harvest festival, two poems (2 of 2)

on this holiday the young chen ping equitably distributed the sacrificial meat
si-ma-qian reports favorably that later on he acquired great riches as a minister
i who now grow old and enfeebled in the far south of the empire
was once a strong young man on the northern shore of the wei river

during this day of universal joy i look out on the inhospitable borderlands
unable to escape from my misery i let the autumn winds carry away my tears
today officials in chang-an return home to share pieces of meat from the emperor's palace
who here in the gorges of the yang-zi will share with this old atrophied man

murphy, toothless, and forced to eat only pablum and overcooked stews
10/14/2008 10:32 AM

von zach XV,28

moon light on the big river

the full moon ripples on the mutable surface of the water
on the high tower i am smothered by melancholy thoughts of home
i have been traveling around in si-chuan for a long time
the thought of growing ever older here stirs me to tears

dew drops glow as small globes under the clear rays of the moon
though the light of the milky way begins to impinge on its singularity
might my wife be sewing her embroidery in my house under this moon tonight
now extinguishing the candle and thinking of her husband so far away

murphy becoming sentimental in his dotage
10/14/2008 10:46 AM

von zach XV,29

the sound of a flute

under a bright full moon and a pure cool breeze
i hear a flute playing up on the mountainside
who might this mysterious person be
the one who touches the core of my being with his song

the pleasant wings of the wafting wind
carry these extremely harmonious sounds to me
the moon outlines the peaks and passes of the mountains
my eyes trace the intricacies of the land

the flute might be for the tatar cavalry moving off to the north
moving in the middle of the night like once did liu-kun
it is sad much like the wu-xi-shen song of ma-yuan
about the difficulties of the return to the homelands after a campaign in the south

now as i think of what is happening now in my old home
i can see the old pastures and the trees stripped of their leaves
how might my feelings of grief be comforted
if i could see those same pastures in their green of next spring

murphy arguing that music can stir overwhelmingly strong emotions
10/14/2008 11:04 AM

von zach XV,30

the solitary wild goose

the solitary wild goose is not interested in food or water
her voice as she flies off fills with longing for her companions
who out there will join up with this lonely bird
she has lost her comrades in the infinite sea of clouds

she stares before herself and wills the flock to follow
she seems lost in a reverie of listening for their calls
the wild crow has no such aching purpose
her caws are useless noise as she flits aimlessly about

murphy separated from his peers and quite alone
10/15/2008 9:29 AM

von zach XV,31

i express my grief

i indulge my drunkenness behind a gate of braided weed stalks
where into the infinite wilderness does it open for me to go
the big river runs before it up to wu montain and duke xiang's fairy temple
my hut is far away from cheng-du-fu and the wang-xiang balcony

my facial features have grown old as i wait here far from home
none of my relatives and few of my friends will ever visit me here
the riots and torments of war are my constant companions
i am filled with a deep pain thinking of my native land

murphy finding his elba in the recesses of his mind
10/15/2008 9:45 AM

von zach XV,32

giving voice to my feelings in kui-zhou-fu

it was when i rejected the position as peace officer of he-xi
that was when the rebellious an-lu-shan sent his troops into ji-bei
one's talent is assumed when appointed to an official post as a young man
i was hurt that my appointment by the ministerial secretary came so late

emperor dai-zong fled to kung-tung mountain in he-nan
i sit here jobless in kui-zhou where the yan-yu rock rises in the big river
although before i was but a floating water chestnut in si-chuan
i was appointed to the offices of governor yan wu by his good graces

having to stay far from the capital i could not serve in the yun-tai palace
i remind myself often of the verses in the yi-jing about the fruitful dew
but unfortunately the numerous imperial headquarters are all far away
and my white hair is ruffled by the storms of time, and i sit here and grieve

i have always been enticed by the naive freedom of the woods and springs
and i have given over most of my time to poetry and the seduction of wine
i had to leave my office because of illness like once did si-ma-xiang-ru
and once i dishonored myself like yang-xiong with an inappropriate censure

my illness hindered me from taking part in discussions between the emperor and minister
and i am still ashamed that the imperial mercy was given to me in its fullness
i threw the javelin outraged at the unworthy treatment of emperor su-zong by the rebels
i drew my sword and wanted to show that my age had not weakened me

then the discussion of the affairs of the empire moved to feng-xiang
the wind and clouds of officials gathered there to discuss and decide
i watched events unfold where blood flowed in rivers before my eyes
my cheeks were ravaged by the torrents flowing from both my eyes

all four of the large rivers of china were filled with warships
fighting raged over the waters and the land, driven by drums and horns
the field trenches of the rebels stretched across the fullness of the land
the carnage of fighting reached into the capital regions of chang-an

then emperor su-zong succeeded in recapturing chang-an and restoring the forefather temple
before his death the first minister li-fu-guo respectfully received the last orders of the ruler
but the cavalry of the rebels remained active in heng-shan in he-bei
and the flags of the enemies continued to fly in liao-dung in feng-tian

the citizens throughout the land complained of the compulsive military service
everyone sought the protection behind the fortifications to forestall enemy advances
at this time the emperor dai-zong showed softness to the rebel generals
allowing their groveling words to hide the hardness within their hearts

for many years then the tribute had ceased to come in from chu and other provinces
one could even doubt whether the old land of the emperor yao remained part of the tang dynasty
i sighed deeply every time the northern robbers rose again in defiance
everywhere i looked toward the west the turfan broke toward us in waves

being only a private individual i had no input in the emperor's decision to go to shan-zhou
yet i kept myself fully prepared to answer any and all questions he might ask of me
then the emperor gave the order to emphasize agricultural activities over martial efforts
he also re-established the educational establishments and lectures resumed

but the imperial plans seemed too difficult to accomplish and were doomed to failure
i was filled with worry like the man of zhi who feared the sky would collapse
my entire demeanor became one of melancholy and despair
and i felt helpless with no ability to aid the emperor in a material fashion

imperial governors official announce the edicts of the ruler concerning taxes
the subordinate officials carry the news out into their local districts
i fear that the collection of the taxes has not gone forward fairly
there seems to be no thought given of the great suffering of the people

there is an ever expanding cost of the maintenance of the vast territories of the empire
the people have become worn down with this burden, especially here in kui-zhou
the rebels who infest the countryside are a continuing great evil
they have gone into the marshes of yun and meng and will be difficult to remove

with all the troubles the empire faces lessons must be considered for the future
one must especially take note of the mood of the people and act accordingly
consultations about the state of the country should result in wise advice for the emperor
i feel that the example of the government of zheng-guan in the recent past should be considered

couriers now travel throughout the land asking for requirements for the government
there are innumerable examples of small blackmails being conducted in every house
even the appearance of another xiao-yu could not calm the people
all the missions sent to si-chuan have proved to be useless

like the fisherman yan-zi-ling i sit now in kui-zhou reading my books
and like zheng-zi-zhen i play a lot of chess beside the cliff wall
the steaming days of summer keep me from working in the garden
but the warmth in winter allows me to wear thin silk throughout the year

i am saddened like wang-can by the continuing evil presence of rebels in chang-an
i am saddened like confucius when he heard of the wounding of the unicorn
i find myself in a foreign land where my talents are not valued
i remember when the poems of my youth were praised by travellers on the sui river

i now enjoy the moonlit nights as a stranger walking in the autumnal cassia
my loyalty to the emperor is that of the sunflower always facing the sun
i hope that customs will return to the simplicity of the golden age
but first a high hill must be formed from the corpses of slain rebels

i am now reduced to searching vainly for a restful place to sleep
there seems to be no answer to be found for these worries of mine
the cloud balcony of the nan-gung palace has portraits of worthy generals
their example must be followed by today's leaders to prevail in this war

murphy an old man reading the papers about inconclusive battles in afghanistan
10/17/2008 9:37 AM

von zach XV,33

i enjoy the moonlight on the boat this 16th night of the 8th month

i am once again bathed by the munificence of the moonlight
nothing surpasses the arrival of autumn when the magical dew glistens
the mountains here on the frontier jut far across the earth i watch
over them the milky way seems extraordinarily close enough to touch

i hear woodcutters in the woods singing their home-bound songs
a flute from the fortress at bo-di-cheng triggers the grief in my heart
the men here at kui-zhou seem to never think of sleep
their boats are still riding the waves as midnight approaches

murphy listening to the noises of the street in the wee hours of a friday night
10/17/2008 2:57 PM

von zach XV,34

i dedicate this poem to my old friend li, fifteenth of his clan, as he departs

the inhabitants of the lands of the gorges live like wild animals or birds
their dwellings cling to the precipitous rocks like dens or nests
the unfathomed deep stream flows ceaselessly below them
ships pass by in either direction traveling unimaginable distances

while here i have been afflicted by a series of illnesses
i meant to stay for only a short time but now it has become years
who could i find in this remote borderland to comfort my heart
but then i was fortunate that such a famous man as you happened by

in my misery and shame i feel inadequate though distantly related to you
and as for an official position how could i stand in your rank
yet by having the time here to share our views and feelings
it has led to our becoming respectful of each other and fast friends

when you first came you sent a servant twice in the same day to invite me to visit
and then within three days i was attending a party in my honor which you hosted
your open welcome and lively entertainments have pleased my frozen heart
and i have discovered to my delight that your poetry flows mighty as a cataract

you are rightfully honored as an outstanding member of your famous family
you remind me of yu-xin who continued his father's art of writing poetry
i hear with displeasure that such a competent man as yourself
should be calumniated by so many of the knowledgeable

because of these unfortunate affairs you have undertaken this difficult trip
you do so in order to provide for your family and yourself
you have come here to bo-di-cheng from the north
and now you will proceed south on into the area of hu-nan

you will meet with li-mian commander of the province giang-si
his fame and stature towers over the other governors
his rule recalls the patriarchal states of gray antiquity
and it is in his state alone that peace and rest exist in this warlike time

his character is pure and clean as the dew on the arch of the emperor han-wu-di
his strength and purpose is that of a drawn bowstring of red silk
he reminds me of the governors of the four gigantic mountain areas under emperor yao
he is a second huang-ba the governor of ying-chuan of the han dynasty

i regret that i cannot travel on with you from here in kui-zhou
my longing for your future company cannot be thus satisfied
your trip will go over high waves and wild mountains
and you will enjoy the hospitality of li-mian at the time of the autumn dews

although your trip will be long and arduous it can be broken up
you will be tired on the way so rest and amuse yourself there for a while
in the mornings you will sit in island breeze pavilion of the governor
there you and he can write drunken poems of the mountains reaching the sky

a noble man cherishes his friends and you shall not be forgotten
perhaps you will stop here on your way back after the fulfillment of your obligations

murphy heaping praise on those who deserve it
10/18/2008 9:46 AM

von zach XV,35

i give this poem to judge tan, second of his clan, as he returns to his residence

the battles of emperor su-zong are far in the past
while this small official still clings to his life
here between the yang-zi and han rivers in kui-zhou
i lie sick and can only dream of an audience in the emperor's palace

now in my old age i give you a white-haired farewell
you go to chang-an, town of the red phoenix that i will never forget
an insatiable longing to go with you overwhelms me
but i am laid low and must remain here in kui-zhou

my heart will be torn when your ship disappears on the horizon
then i will be left in this cold autumn weather to watch the waters wash the sand
my only hope is that in the future my lungs and liver will feel a little better
and i can also proceed to chang-an to the emperor's court

murphy watching the time run out in the fourth quarter of a losing game
10/18/2008 10:05 AM

von zach XV,36

beside the stream

during the days i spend on the shore of the yang-zi there is much rain
the autumn in this mountainous land is cold and inhospitable
the wind whips down from the hights and blows the leaves to the ground
during the interminable sleepless nights i wrap myself in my sable fur

i would like to acquire a salary, but a glance in the mirror reminds of my advanced age
i can only wait here in the west tower and decide whether to stay or where to walk
in these dangerous times i would like to repay the mercy of my ruler
despite my senility and poor health i still wish to contribute

murphy out to pasture and not liking it
10/18/2008 10:15 AM

von zach XV,37

i send this cut verse to judge cui, my maternal nephew, fifth of his clan, and to the nephew of
underdistrict judge wei

i am like the leopard in the woods who tries to escape from the rain
while you are like the dragons in the water who welcome the clouds
moreover, there is much ordure lying on the sinuuous trail leading to my hut
that must be why you, my worthy friends, have not found your way here to me

i do have the beauty of the big river and the mountains as i sit here
and i do re-read your poems which remind me of bao-zhao and xie-ling-yun
i think back fondly to our unconstrained entertainment on the high tower
where we sat in the chill autumn breeze and shared our deepest feelings

murphy whiling away his time in a less than cozy backwater
10/18/2008 10:32 AM

von zach XV,38

watching the rain from the west apartment

the rain has splattered the curtains to my hawk's eyrie
it is now a cold night in the city by the river
my walks on the beach wall are different now
the sharp rocks below have lost their blanket of sand

chrysanthemums sadly have scattered their color
but the pine forest above persists in its green
the balustrade gleams its red lacquer
i stand by a pillar in the veranda, worried

murphy interrupting the reading of his morning papers

tu fu hung cclxxviii
6-12-03 10:am

von zach XV, 39

on a nice evening i am visited in my north hut by officer wu

the patches of our vegetable gardens have just been moistened by the rain
i am ashamed you have left work in your garden to come to mine
i rise to meet my welcome guest and neighbor on the path beside my work hut
right where the ends of our bamboo groves touch each other

the many birds who are beginning to roost make a loud noise
despite the coming end of day you, my friend, come to help me home
tomorrow is the ninth day of the ninth month when much wine is drunk
i trust you will come to my house where we can share more than a few mugs

murphy grateful for any and all human contact
10/18/2008 10:43 AM

von zach XV,40

for tomorrow's chong-yang party my friends will meet in the woods

tomorrow morning begins the party of the ninth day of the ninth month
we have decided to meet in the woods instead of as usual climbing a mountain
for an old man it is difficult to rise early and leave the house
fortunately everyone is clear about where to assemble so i can meet them there

once it was the custom to pick many chrysanthmums on this day
but i move slower now, and i note my white hair as i comb it out
whenever i see young people energetically enjoying themselves
i hide my tears of frustration in the sleeves of my garment

murphy contemplating using a cane like his father did at the end
10/20/2008 9:43 AM

von zach XV,41

at night

the white frost of autumn is drawn down from the high sky, the river waters are clear
the idea of spending the night midst the desolate mountains daunts my spirit
a single yacht which dropped anchor here sports the only light to be seen
a new moon appears late in the evening, i hear the sounds of women washing cloth

the chrysanthmums of the south are in blossom now and find me sick again
there is no letter from the north and i am forgotten by the wild goose messengers
i pace my floor walking with a cane and stare out at the starry sky
i see the milky way point toward the distant capital of chang-an

murphy finding sleep to be more and more difficult as his decrepitude progresses
10/20/2008 9:56 AM

vm zach XV,42

on an autumn day i send poems to the chief of staff zheng-shen, to be written on his pavillion,
three poems (1 of 3)

the green grass of spring has left these river areas
now one sees countless miles of autumnal colors
the beautiful lake holds back the horse of zheng-shen
the moon shines quietly on the pavilion of another yu-liang

since i left my career as an official, only poetry remains to me
i spend my entire life as if i were out on a boat, fishing
now the cold waves are much lower beneath the gao-tang balcony
i imagine i can see the grave of chu-zhao-wang by your lake in jiang-ling

murphy keeping up appearances
10/20/2008 10:14 AM

von zach XV,43

on an autumn day i send poems to the chief of staff zheng-shen, to be written on his pavillion,
three poems (2 of 3)

recently you built a house on the shore of your lake
and i have heard you wish for guests to visit
you will of course have cleared the path behind the bamboos
it would not do for you to become a hermit behind scraggly grasses

in your official career you were a bit foolhardy like pan-yo
but you were supremely rich in talents much like jia-yi
i must give in to my predilection to wander and go find your new house
i might even think about becoming your neighbor, how about that

murphy feathering his nest with the materials at hand
10/20/2008 10:25 AM

von zach XV,44

on an autumn day i send poems to the chief of staff zheng-shen, to be written on his pavillion,
three poems (3 of 3)

you stayed for only a short time as a cabinet officer of the emperor
then you became a recluse as one who has fallen into the river and the sea
you spend bounteously adhering to the adage, born with nothing, leave with nothing
you felt the gathering of riches in office did not fit your deepest desires

you now have fine autumn vegetables to cook in your soup
you now float fresh dew laden chrysanthmum in your wine mug
i had thought to describe the beauties of your lake in these poems
but hesitated to do so since you would be able to do it so much better

murphy playing second fiddle and not singing lead
10/20/2008 10:33 AM

von zach XV,45

autumn meditation (8 poems) (1 of 8)

white jade of dream melts the maples
witch mountain, witch gorge soughing with trees
chopping waves of the river echo sky
the shadows slink to their dark ground

late flower's tears bring back the rest
i, and this flimsy boat, will get us home
i sew, they sew, these clothes for cold time
i beat, they beat, their cleanness on the shore

murphy sitting in his family chair
6-12-03 6:00 pm
2-18-04 3:00 pm

von zach XV,46

autumn meditation (8 poems) (2 of 8)

i watch the sun go down in kui-zhou
the north star points me toward the capital
i snuffle shrill as a gibbon, then i cry
river this high cannot be ridden, i'll never get there

i lie near incense in the healing ward
hear only bugles from the far courtyard
and watch the moon that lit the ivied city walls
now rest its white breath on the river reeds

murphy recovering from his first day back on the job
3-1-04 1:40 pm

von zach XV,47

autumn meditation (8 poems) (3 of 8)

soft gold of early sun flecks off a thousand homes
purple reflects the river far below my veranda
a fisherman out all night wends his slow way home
swallows are still here though it's turned cold

duties as reminder were lifted when i bespoke the throne
new duties as master teacher were not to my taste
most of the young men i studied with are now the stars
i can only imagine their bright clothes and fast horses in chang-an

murphy sipping soda slowly in early spring sunshine
3-2-04 3:45 pm
3-3-04 2:05 pm

von zach XV,48

autumn meditation (poems) (4 of 8)

some say chang-an is like a go game
badly played these last hundred years
there are new champions living in the mansions
neither advisers nor generals up to the old standards

straight north beyond the mountains are the trumpets and drums
out to the west are important travelers to and from the war
fish and dragons are quiet here by this cold autumn river
here in my old country i can think freely

murphy doing his homework like he should
3-2-04 4:45 pm
3-3-04 2:00 pm

von zach XV,49

autumn meditation (8 poems) (5 of 8)

i remember peng-lai palace facing the southern mountains
the bronze pillars built to catch immortal dew
to the west the waters of the turquoise pool
looking east i thought of lao-zi in the purple mist

i remember the pheasant screens opening like clouds
with his majesty's face and the dragon scale robe
now i wonder in this lateness of my time
how many times i saw him emerge from his gate

murphy nettled by his forgetfulness
3-4-04 5:45 pm

von zach XV,50

autumn meditation (8 poems) (6 of 8)

i remember meandering water from the gorge's mouth
the winding jiang through the deepening mists, pale in fall
from there through to the palace the empire breathed
then troubles on the border got into, destroyed, lotus park

i remember the pearl-sewn curtains, the yellow cranes
embroidery, brocade, ivory masks, and white gulls
i turn attention back to the dancing and the songs
since long, long before qin has been home for the emperor

murphy thinking of going for a walk on a dreary night
3-5-05 5:40 pm

von zach XV,51

autumn meditation (8 poems) (7 of 8)

the kun ming lake engineered by the han
red banners, emperor wu afloat, there, before my eyes
i still see the weaving maid, moonlit, romantic
the stone whales a moving water of cold fall

wild rice in the winds of the black sinking cloud
river plant's red seed swirling its stain
there is no way back except the bird's flight
a cold expanse of water and no place to hold

murphy steaming out the last small rain
3-6-04 3:00 pm

von zach XV,52

autumn meditation (8poems) (8 of 8)

the imperial stream wound past kun wu
the shadow of the summit entered the lovely pool
sticky sweet rice stalks left over by the parrots
the first green of spring a phoenix of fire

young maidens waved feathers of morning
the women on the boats late in the evening
i talked of it often with my brush
i won't live to go back there again

murphy splashing in his spirit of form
3-6-04 4:15 pm

von zach XV,53

i send these verses to the scholar bo who lives within the forest

i am driven to the memory of the rebellion of the tatars
that was when an-lu-shan turned his lances and shields against china
the scholars throughout the country were taken aback
and were forced to find a means to escape

i sigh at the fact you yourself made the decision
to move with your library into a wooded loneliness
it grieves me that you now are exposed to the rigor of the weather
and that your humble hut lies alone at the foot of a mountain

though since you are deep within a chain of mountains
your sanctuary is certainly quiet and undisturbed
but when the autumnal rains wash your mountains
you have only the surrounding bamboo grasses to protect yourself

for myself at the end of my interminable travels
i have ended up here in kui-zhou hiding from the troubles
i ask you as a man of letters and wisdom who has thought about these things
how do the events of the current day measure up to the actions of the ancients

the seasons here on the shores of the yang-zi pass me by
i am sure the people experience the changes in the capital of chang-an
in the gorges of the big river i now look out
on incessant clouds and rains both day and night

in the maple woods the leaves have reached their peak of color
and from within the flocks of starlings sing their incessant songs
the grouse indulge in their mating dances in the mud
the natural world exudes its strength along the wild shores of the yang-zi

i dare not venture far into the surrounding woods
the devilish rebels are to be found most anywhere
my body and soul feel lonesome here far away from my home
yet i must admit that i have become inured to this misery

when might you take it upon yourself to knock upon the emperor's gate
to offer your elevated advice about the continuing riots
each offering of your advice would give security to the people
it would be as if you used your will to build protective walls

murphy diagramming an offensive play for his high school football team
10/20/2008 4:42 PM

von zach XV,54

five songs thinking of the past (1 of 5)

it all began when i barely escaped the tumult of war in the northeast
i walk the earth in the southwest now, i pace and look up to the sky
i have become very sick and am held back in the gorges at kui-fu
there is nothing here but men in barbarous costumes and mountains reaching the sky

the calamity began because the emperor trusted the traitor an-lu-shan
this peripatetic poet deplores the tenor of these hard times, and cannot return home
it is all reminiscent of the poet yu-xin whose entire long life was unhappy
the last great flowering of his poetry was longing for his homeland in giang-nan

murphy searching for parallels to his peculiar existence
10/21/2008 1:55 PM

von zach XV,55

five songs thinking of the past (2 of 5)

i look on the withering nature of life in autumn and understand
why the talented poet song-yu's complaints echo in my mind
i look back a thousand years and am awash with tears
alone here i am sorry not to have been his friend and contemporary

his old house stood in kui-zhou but only his poems have come down to us
was he not the first who described the fairy cloud of morning becoming the rain of evening
yet the worst is the complete disappearance of the xiang-wang palaces
the boatmen who pass the area point to where it might have been but no one is sure

murphy beginning the stripped winter of his life
10/21/2008 2:12 PM

von zach XV,56

five songs thinking of the past (3 of 5)

a thousand watercourses of countless mountains rush down to the watergate at jing-men
there is a village there where the radiant concubine zhao-jun was born and raised
but once she had left the emperor's palace the endless gobi stretched before her
there she lies in her grass covered grave kept green in the yellow dust of the desert

her many portraits always show her with a face blossoming with the colors of spring
her ghost paces there with a quiet noise of her girdle pendants yearning to return
a sad alien song has been sung for a thousand years about a chinese princess wed to a foreigner
only for zhao-jun was such a song composed for the sorrow of a woman at court

murphy listening to the sad ballads of the carter family
10/22/2008 10:59 AM

von zach XV,57

five songs thinking of the past (4 of 5)

liu-bei the ruler of si-chuan came to the wu empire and reached the three gorges
when he died he was within the walls of his bo-di-cheng fortress
i see banners of the emperor's ghost floating above these desolate mountains
the ruins of his palace lie within a group of surrounding cloisters

within the cypresses surrounding his old commemorative temple water birds nest
but one sees only old men come to the summer and winter picnics to sacrifice
the temple of zhu-go-liang lies close by in the adjoining area
sacrifice is made at the same time for the ruler and for his minister

murphy leading a group of travellers through the old battleground
10/22/2008 11:15 AM

von zach XV,58

five songs thinking of the past (5 of 5)

the fame of zhu-go-liang reverberates throughout the world
his portrait serves to remind of the high ideals a minister should strive to achieve
although his strategical plans after the trisection of the empire are not fully explainable
nevertheless the genius of his entire service penetrates the clouds like a bird

those who might be considered his equals are yi-yin and lu-shang
but xiao-he and cao-can could not match him on the battlefield
the luck which had turned against the han dynasty was never to return
zhu was resolved to sacrifice for its good and his body succumbed to the strains of war

murphy extolling robert e. lee for fighting bravely in a lost cause
10/22/2008 11:26 AM

von zach XV,59

palace inspector yang-yan gives me a sheet of calligraphy by zhang-xu

zhang-xu has already walked across to the other side
and the secret of his free-flowing characters goes with him
now i have been given an example of his craft he left behind
after a lengthy study i am filled with grief at the death of my old friend

it is to me as if a sad wind emanated from the fine silk
as if the characters from the past were writ large in the air
it is as if one heard girdle pendants moving in harmony
as if a long line of spruces moved melodically in the wind

between the characters one imagines mountains to be writhing
the strength of his brush is that of the rising flood of the sea
when he had silk he first made sure to practice his strokes before he began
on the sides of his inkstone everything was black from his ink

the beauty and life of his characters were the central issue for him
the older he became the more he considered the perfection of the stroke
after the deaths of zhang-bo-yin and wang-xi-zhi who else could there be
for the next one hundred generations who might become equal to zhang-xu

the independence of the writing style of this miraculous man
stirred the pure art understanding of inspector yang-yan
he dusted and opened the suitcase carrying the scrolls of zhang-xu
and forgot eating and sleeping while he gazed on the opened rolls

i remember once when zhang-xu wielded the paintbrush when i was present
i certainly admired his desire for drink, but above all i honored the grace of his writing

murphy in awe at an exhibition of von gogh
10/22/2008 11:53 AM

von zach XV,60

palace inspector yang-yan shows me a twelve panel screen with painted falcons

in modern times feng-shao-zheng is famous
he has a great skill in painting birds of prey
my illustrious guest's servant presents a screen
the over all effect demonstrates the painter's style well

the birds are placed on the screen in natural positions
and they all are convincingly rapacious
they compete with the best horses for speed
and are as daring as a general of a thousand soldiers

i remember how once the imperial guard were moved one winter
they went up into the mountains to the pleasure palace on li-shan
the weather was very cold and a great hunt was organized
i saw falcons there with the regal expressions captured on these screens

the unusually active falcons on that hunt were sent to kill
they untiringly succeeded each other again and again
the falcons painted here resemble those noble birds
i become sad at the passing of the time when such could be indulged

since the uprising began the court has had no time for hunting
and those real falcons have grown old without being used
would that they could return to the arm of the emperor
to hunt those rebel hares for him and to once more effectively kill

murphy remembering his first rabbit hunt with his father
10/23/2008 9:51 AM

von zach XV,61

i give yang-yan escort as he leaves for cheng-du-fu to meet with general du-hong-jian, the former state minister

the river flows on and the waves never return upstream
clouds rise and divide over the mountains without duplication
people live in this world, settle here then there
then they move on again without a permanent pattern

after such separations only a few will ever meet again
nothing is ever certain in times of upheaval
i give you escort at the end of the clear days of autumn
this is by far the saddest time of the year

brave men eagerly seek new ventures and glory
the state needs such men for its continuing war
general du-hong-jian supervises the districts liang and yi
all have the highest confidence in his military prowess

you are to serve general hung as once xu-zhi served chen-fan
who better than you to have been chosen for this position
besides you have already held high position at court
how could you object to becoming the judge of a province

you cannot neglect your purpose of collecting money for the troops
however, show compassion for the private properties of the people
as long as the uprising continues you must follow the laws with a strong hand
but you must be careful not to resort to unthinking extortion

during your trip on the boat be sure to wear a hat when passing the big boulders
on your overland journey you will be bothered by the excessive dews of morning
in the gorges of the yang-zi now the sun is getting low and darkness approaches
do not forget that his one left behind will be thinking of you with longing

murphy watching young men jostle for position in the marketplace of talent
10/24/2008 9:50 AM

von zach XV,62

the beginning of winter

here away from home many things are different, even astonishing
especially when thinking of the beginning of winter in chang-an
i break open an orange while frost nips my finger tips
i pour out fresh rice even though it is now snowing

here in the gorges of the yang-zi it is normally cold only in winter
the black barbarians of kui-zhou are always victims of malaria
now that winter is here the big river has started to fall
i am glad that the dragons have finally begun their annual rest

murphy slowly adjusting to an alien environment
10/24/2008 10:18 AM

von zach XV,63

in low spirits

toxic miasmas flow through all three provinces of si-chuan
wind-whipped clouds darken the country of a hundred barbarian tribes
if i roll up my curtain i look out on the shining water of the big river
leaning back in my chair i can look up to the green mountains

the nimble monkeys know to always stay hidden from the people
the gulls which normally amuse have all gone away from me
i am stuck here with no money or resources to make it back home
but i do have this mirror faithfully reflecting a face growing older and older

murphy with no prospects waiting out his days
10/24/2008 10:46 AM

von zach XV,64

thunder

in the middle of the night the gorges of the yang-zi are shaken
here even into the tenth month the big river has thunder
dragons and snakes find it difficult to begin their hibernation
the skies and the earth seem to have returned to the patters of summer

the thunder echoes all through the desolate mountains
the flash dives down deep past the precipitous cliff wall
now when there are no clouds and rain as in the summer
why should the famed balcony of xiang ring with such noise

murphy abhorring the misbegotten name of indian summer
10/24/2008 10:53 AM

von zach XV,65

dawn, 2 poems (1 of 2)

i see the sun rising south of the chu-gong palace
an icy sky stretches beyond a thousand ridges
inhabitants of the wilderness walk their lonely mornings
there where clouds and tress blur into each other

a might hawk glides noiselessly by eying the ground
a hungry crow waits eagerly to swoop down in search of food
only i sit still with an ill body not ready to move
like the fallen leaf i await my destiny on the shore of the big river

murphy sitting quiet, alertly waiting for a fish to bite
10/24/2008 12:31 PM

von zach XV,66

dawn, 2 poems (2 of 2)

the ships on the shore of the big stream begin to move
the huts of the farmers of kui-zhou are still shut to the cold
the trees engage in a conversation of falling leaves
gulls begin to fly up to this waking wilderness

the wet foundation stones have dried from the recent rain
the weather has cleared and there are only a few scattered clouds
in winter one is surprised by the weather in the wu mountains
last evening i heard the throaty rumble of thunder

murphy sleepless again in the early morning
10/24/2008 12:38 PM

von zach XV,67

in kui-zhou, the deepest south of the empire

here in the extreme south one finds many green mountains
it is where the valley of the western yang-zi enters the bo-gu valley
in the old town of kui-zhou the bare limbed trees are spindly
cold clouds ball up over the desolate bo-di-cheng fortress

throughout the year here one can often see snakes
while the sounds of the storms are like the roars of the tiger
behind me are unclimbable mountains, only birds can get over them
many foreign elements live among the local population

plaintive discordant sounds come from the parapet of the fortress
the flags flying there are reddened by the sinking sun
it troubles me to hear overly loud talk from the drunken officers
as once li-guang was saddened upon hearing the complaints of the officers of ba-ling

murphy lonely, and stuck in the hinterlands
10/24/2008 12:58 PM

von zach XV,68

evening

in the evening i stroll the narrow lanes with my cane
i warm my back against the town walls still warm from the sun
the people know my penchant for lonely wandering
and i know how valuable it is to hide my own foolishness

to find out the affairs at court i ask the officials
to find out about agriculture i ask the local farmers
the birds have already returned to their nests in the woods
the people close their doors now and go to bed

murphy following his habitual rhythms of being
10/24/2008 2:24 PM

von zach XV,69

at night on the west tower

the cold waters of the stream are indistinct this evening
they seem dark beneath winding wisps of white smoke
the winds roar above against the rocks of the desolate mountains
the west tower is peaceful and the moon shines through the open gate

the night watchmen signals the end of another sad day
many are cold in the village without heat or adequate clothes
these dangerous times continue to trouble my soul
the continued existence of these pestilential rebels is deplorable

murphy watching the stock market decline and the country go into recession
10/24/2008 2:32 PM

von zach XV,70

full moon

the unrivaled moon illuminates the west tower
the cold stream rushes past my open gate this night
the moonlight on the water shimmers with delight
the embroidery patterns on my furnishing are clearly seen

because of the bright moon even the desolate mountains seem warmer
it is high in the sky and bedims the usually visible signs of the zodiac
i think of the luxuriant spruce and cassia flowers in my garden at home
though they are so far away they bask under the same moon

murphy never ever getting over his sense of loss
10/25/2008 10:36 AM

von zach XV,71

midnight

the west tower is a thousand feet above the waters
at midnight i slowly walk behind its carved windows
shooting stars fly over the moonlit waters
the sinking moon leaves dark the sandy shore

i understand why the lonely bird seeks shelter in the wood
i think of the mighty fish lurking deep beneath the waves
though i have relatives and friends throughout the world
in these war torn times i receive few letters here

murphy feeling his layers peel off like an onion
10/25/2008 10:46 AM

von zach XV,72

i cannot sleep

in the gorges the waters are dark after the moon sets
at midnight the night guards are changed in town
the atmosphere turns murky in the darkness
though the stars gleam brighter in the sky

though my spirit has grown weaker i can still find no sleep
because i do not like pain i want no more grief, but it will not let go
everywhere in the mountains and valleys are camps of armed men
and i can't find tao-yuan-ming's peaceful peach blossom springs

murphy cradling a colicky baby in the wee hours
10/25/2008 11:00 AM

von zach XV,73

the gull

on the shore of the big river a shivering single gull plays
if it were not so individual it could be as contented as other gulls
she wants to flash her white wings and fly to spring
her heart's desire succulent spring time sprouts

when the snow begins to fall again she still must bathe
when the wintry winds gust she still must fly to shelter
how many crowds of gulls play in the blue seas to the south
in their easy life there to daily soar high in the winds

murphy allowing himself to envy the rich and pampered
10/25/2008 11:09 AM

von zach XV,74

the monkey

your shout incessantly echoes off the bare cliff walls
your long arms hanging onto the barren branches
a person has not your freedom to escape from worries
you know how and when to be able to disappear

in your life you follow the others in your band
though you probably use cunning to get your own way
you seem always to be running before me in the woods
i sometimes worry that you might leave your young behind

murphy anthropomorphic to his own detriment
10/25/2008 11:21 AM

von zach XV,75

the sturgeon

yellow sturgeons abound in the eastern gorges of si-chuan
one may see them taken into boats by fishermen every day
their fat meat is so abundant as food it is also fed to dogs
even the largest fish cannot escape the nets of the fishermen

the custom is to use all manner of nets, traps and weirs
and the wind and storm do not help these enormous fish escape
they are placed on the slushy sandy shore where they gasp for breath
one is surprised by their dragon scales which failed to protect them

murphy listening to his father's tales of fishing on the leon river in texas
10/27/2008 9:35 AM

von zach XV,76

the small white fish

small white fish abound in the river and swim in schools
they are quite small often only three inches long
they are some of the smallest of water creatures
after old custom they are often eaten as appetizers

they are brought to market in baskets filled with their white blooms
when the baskets are empty the scales left behind look like flakes of snow
they are slaughtered in such great numbers one often wonders
whether such wholesale killing is sustainable forever

murphy watching the endless herd of gnu trek across the serengeti
10/27/2008 9:54 AM

von zach XV,77

the musk deer

you are a timid wild thing who has left the woods forever
forsaking the company of the wild boar, to be served as a delicacy
you had no talent to find the hiding place of the immortals
and thus you were doomed to be taken to the kitchen

turmoil in the world does not respect preservation of the living
and even small notice will bring misfortune to the individual
you are destined to tickle the palate of the ruling officials
though you might have landed in the hands of robbers and thieves

murphy thanking the deer for giving its life to further his own
10/27/2008 12:11 PM

von zach XV,78

the parrot

the parrot seems sad sitting forlorn on his perch
perhaps he is thinking of being taken from the wilds
his blue-green feathers are a bit bedraggled
yet his red beak continues its miming chatter

his day of freedom has not arrived on this day
and the branch on which he once sat remains unused
what good is it for him to be fed and petted
of what use here is his once beautiful plumage

murphy a fish out of water in the executive suite
10/27/2008 12:21 PM

von zach XV,79

the cock

one of the good qualities of the cock that one speaks of
is that he will crow three times at the break of day
but here far away from my old home he doesn't call
and he appears not to be ashamed of his unpunctual shouts

this laziness reflects the lazy character of the local people
who use their chickens only for roasting and eating
in the interim period between the night and the day
there is no caller to wake the wu gorges to morning

murphy the old farmer using everything but the squeal of the pig
10/27/2008 12:33 PM

von zach XV,80

wanderings of youth

once in my youth i climbed to the balcony at shan-fu
accompanied on the way by gao-shi and li-tai-bo
we looked out on the cold pastureland stretching to the eastern sea
the chill autumn wind brought clouds from a thousand miles away

the leaves of the oak and mulberry fell thick as rain
the bean plants danced around in the whirling gusts
the marshes below glinted with sheets of ice
the birds and animals made mournful sounds

at that time the grain magazines were full
and the roads throughout the empire were open and free
the victorious army remembered destroying central asian hordes
successful generals awaited the highest honors of the state

the emperor was giving out many lands and titles
then the rogue an-lu-shan began stripping the land for his troops
he took the grains and canvas cloth from giang-su
materiel was brought to him over the sea past peng-lai island

his 300,000 parasitic troops were fed and housed
useless forays were organized but only yellow dust was raised
i remember we three looked out over beyond huang-he for a long time
our blooming youth began to fade quickly as we stood on that balcony

the present cannot bring back that glorious past time
and i no longer share mugs of wine with those two friends
by writing these verses i shed copious old man's tears
i can only wish that such men might arise again in these troubled times

the wen-xuan reminds that when rulers wish to buy great racers
those rare runners are searched for and ultimately found
four old men of the shang-shan prevented the dismissal of the crown prince
liu-bei rejected all spurious suspicions of zhu-ge-liang

lu-shang was enfeoffed with a district by zho-wen-wang
fu-yue was a man who could not have been done without
pan-gung followed his instinct and withdrew with his son
they went into the lonely wilderness to rest on the green moss

now evening has descended over the mountains of kui-zhou
one hears the heron cry as she flies worriedly away to her nest

murphy willing away the pains of his arthritis with the help of a modicum of wine
10/27/2008 5:17 PM

von zach XV,81

i send these verses to du-wei with whom i served in the headquarters of the late yan-wu and who is now serving in jiang-ling under wei-bo-yu

the cold sun quickly passes over the eaves, and leaves
the monkey complains because he must leave his tree
to live in the gorges as a stranger is detestable
i prefer to remember the time we served together

where can i now turn in this world of earth and sky
how could i have not become sick in these warlike times
i finish this note to you as two glistening pearls flow from my eyes
they fall onto the letter and wet the newborn poem

murphy touching base with his old friends
10/28/2008 3:57 PM

von zach XV,82

i escort xian-yu as he leaves to become prefect of wan-zhou

your father stood at the forefront of his contemporaries
your entire family are gems who are picked to serve
the court has given unusual interest to your family
and has now chosen you for the management of wan-zhou

in the farewell party are many guests crowding around your departing ship
they jostle each other enthusiastically on the shore of the cold stream
i know you will show your outstanding abilities in your new position
and i fully expect for you more mercy from the emperor in the future

murphy keeping up the proper contacts for any possible future outcome
10/28/2008 4:09 PM

von zach XV,83

i wait again for the district judge from da-chang on the west tower

earlier i invited you to visit and spend the night with me
now i expect you to need a further urgent request
for two nights i have waited for the sounds of your arrival
while you continue to make your morning visits with your superiors

the bells toll the beginning of morning once again
the candles have exhausted all their rolling tears
below the balustrade two ducks swim in the stream
their play is carefree, they show none of life's anxieties

murphy outranked and inferior
10/28/2008 4:23 PM

von zach XV,84

i warm myself in the sun on the western tower

because of the extreme cold this winter i wish to warm my bones
my favorite spot is here sunning meself on the western tower
xi-he the driver of the solar chariot beams his mercy everywhere
zhuan-xu the god of the north and winter respects his will

i beam contentment in the warmth of my expression
my body takes strength and life into its inner core
the sun is extraordinarily giving in its deep charity
my weakness flows away within its protection and stimulation

half recumbent i accept the full attention of the sun
my ill legs stir and give hints at recovering their strength
i watch a nimble monkey walk to the tip of the branches
a crane circles elegantly around the mountain tops

friends have come to visit but then they leave
joy and pain are both visited within a single day
i take occasion to indulge in sketching a poem
life flows quickly, today as well as yesterday

everything has become strange in recent politics
nobility of effort emerges beside abject misery
why am i so absorbed with the ending of life
why does my heart weaken when there is life in the sun

murphy thinking carefully about retiring to south texas
10/28/2008 4:36 PM

von zach XV,85

winter solstice

the seasons and men take their cues from the sun
at the wintersolstice the light of spring begins its appearance
women of the harem can embroider more tomorrow in the longer day
tomorrow ashes of six bamboo canes will rise as the emergence of yang

on the river's shore another month will bring green sprouts
the mountains will eventually welcome the light with plum buds
clouds and nature remain the same though i am far from my homeland
for the moment i accept more wine to drown my sorrows of exile

murphy in the hinterlands and attuned to nature
10/29/2008 9:33 AM

von zach XV,86

the bound hens

my servant binds several hens to carry them to market
as they are tied together they fight noisily with each other
the people in my house don't like this since these hens eat insects
and they know what the hens do not, that they are to be roasted

which of the two is more deserving of compassion, hens or insects
reluctantly i order my servant to unbind the load of hens
the question of which is best to protect, hens or insects, is undecidable
my face takes on a stern cast as i lean on the wall and look out over the river

murphy pretending to be solomon
10/29/2008 9:44 AM

von zach XV,87

the marvelous race horse of governor wei-bo-yu

i have heard of a marvelous horse in zhing-nan
it is the racer with white fetlocks of governor wei-bo-yu
when you hold him back from running red sweat drips from his mane
and he looks over at the race grounds where the catalpa trees stand

the tatars were already three years established in this territory
before finally wei-bo-yu succeeded in ridding them from this patch of earth
now when someone asks the governor where he rides
he answers around the pond of xi-jia on a horse that is meant for war

murphy oiling his guns to keep them from rusting
10/29/2008 9:57 AM

von zach XV,88

two falcons, two poems (1 of 2)

i meet with the army inspector wang who tells me of two falcons in the mountains, one white, one black. his birdcatchers have tried for quite a while but cannot capture them with their nets. wang says they are outstanding birds and he fears they will fly away at the end of winter and he will never see them again. because of this he asks me to describe them poetically. i have written the following two poems:

he sits quiet as white precious jade or soars like a flashing snowflake
he spares not his beautiful plumage flying everywhere in the wilderness
those who wish to net him exhaust their strength in vain
why do those to whom he has done nothing attempt his capture

his entire life is given over to the hunt and he excels at his craft
because of his success he is proud and will not sit tamed on the sleeve of a hunter
any bird which flies will succumb to this marvelous bird
however the hare who hides in his burrow of three holes remains safe

murphy watching his father tend his prize pigeons
10/29/2008 10:23 AM

von zach XV,89

two falcons, two poems (2 of 2)

up until now a black falcon has not been seen in this area
i believe he has flown here over the seas in the extreme north
with his spread of wings he flew over the great wall
in the dark of winter he spent only a single night on the yang-tai balcony

the hunters have found it futile to attempt his capture
when he flies back north in the spring with the geese they will fear him
he needs only a days to cover countless miles in the cold air
certainly his golden eyes and jade white claws belong to no ordinary bird

murphy wishing his eyes were as sharp as the eagle's
10/29/2008 10:30 AM

von zach XV,90

i respectfully escort secretary bo from shu-zhou (second of his clan) as he proceeds to jiang-ling,
and at the same time ask him to give this poem to my cousin du-wei

because the governor bo-zhen-jie often travels in this area
he has asked his younger brother to proceed with a letter to jiang-ling
the governor has been appointed to be inspector of defenses of five border provinces
he now takes this opportunity to ask after the condition of the mother of wei-bo-yu

now when a ship may pass on the water enlarged by the thaw in the wu mountains
here in bo-di-cheng the weather has already become more spring-like
it is a pleasure to be able to send a message along to my cousin du-wei
he will excuse this white haired old man of writing one poem for two men

murphy noting the first hints of his coming dotage
10/30/2008 9:59 AM

von zach XV,91

night on the western tower

at the end of the year yang is ascendant over yin and the nights are long
at the end of the world a cold clear night over a world of frost and snow
drums and horns make loud mournful sounds at the fifth morning hour
the milky way scintillates above the three gorges in an ink-black sky

across the land thousands of families cry for their war dead
but here i hear also the songs of the early fishermen and woodcutters
the loyal zhu-go-liang and the rebellious gong-sun in the end, both dust
what does it matter that my life trickles away, me alone without news from home

murphy feeling sorry for himself, a rare indulgence
10/30/2008 10:12 AM

von zach XV,92

gazing at nang-xi from the west tower

the cold transparent water reflects all of nature, all of life
the morning sun sheds its rays through the infinite heavens
as i have grown older i find i more often look out with pleasure
the beauties of distant vistas have taken on more depth of meaning

the monkeys chase each other through the trees incessantly
it is pleasant to see the gulls catch the light in their flight
when spring finally arrives here in the gorges
i will search for an apartment for myself in nang-xi

murphy feathering his nest with nothing else to do
10/30/2008 10:23 AM

von zach XV,93

i escort my motherly uncle (seventeenth of his clan) as he proceeds to shao-zhou and kui-yang-zhou

it is again the end of the winter and i am at the end of the world
during my entire life of wandering i have been pursued by illness
it is extremely difficult for me to say good-bye to you, my motherly uncle
after you have gone i will have no one left to visit with

in the blurred distance where you travel there is no shelter made ready
traveling with your mother you must seek appropriate lodging upon your arrival
numerous dark clouds and watercourses will separate us then
i will think of you often and my soul will be deeply saddened

murphy losing touch with his kin one by one
10/30/2008 10:34 AM

von zach XV,94

i escort the auditor wang (sixteenth of his clan)

all my other friends have left for jiang-ling
today you also mount the ship to depart
your boat has already loaded its firewood
and the oars are ready to make quick work of your trip

the spring comes early to heng mountain on the way
the xiao and xiang rivers will have high water
in jiang-ling in the desolate wood is the old house of yu-xin
ask your superior to try to restore it so i may visit some day

murphy still holding out hope as time runs out
30.10.2008 10:40

von zach XV,95

i still have not left the west tower

the pastures on the shore of the big river have started to green
although spring is not yet here a few flowers have begun to bloom
here in this southern border region true cold is not known, miasmas prevail
the twelfth month already approaches and spring warmth has begun

i let my silly children run free without insisting on their lessons
i own no home where my decrepit old body can find its rest
i do not know whether i am welcome to stay in the west tower much longer
they might wish me to leave or they could allow me to stay

murphy watching his options diminish day by day
10/30/2008 12:47 PM

von zach XV,96

i still have not left the west tower, two poems (2 of 2)

the west tower has always attracted me for its views
i have determined to stay here for a while longer
the clouds climb up here from the stream like white silk
the rocks rise around me into the blue firmament

in the early morning i see the sun climb up from the eastern sea
at night i look up to the glitter of the starry milky way
my whole life i have admired glorious scenic vistas
i was overwhelmed here from the first moment i looked out

murphy listening to his grandmother describe the scenery she saw on her greyhound bus tours
10/30/2008 1:02 PM

von zach XV,97

i visit the abbot of the zhen-di cloister

the cloister lies high on the top of a mountain
surrounded by numerous cloud covered other peaks
an icy spring runs clear over fine pebbles
melting snow falls from the surrounding spruce

if i am accepted as an apprentice my poetry will be pointless
looking at my frail body i should give up drinking wine
but still i cannot tear myself away from other people
though i would like to have an apartment in the mountains nearby

murphy torn as ever between asceticism and libido
10/30/2008 1:12 PM

von zach XV,98