

during the first day of the ninth month i visit meng, twelfth of his clan, official of the rice warehouse, and his brother, the archivist, fourteenth of his clan

walking with my cane i leave my house into the early cold
i open the bramble gate and proceed through the morning fogs
my stamina is low because of illness so i pause to rest under the trees
being old and exhausted i lay my book aside and fall asleep

this fall i have not visited many friends due to my condition
but today i come to visit you two with the warmest of feelings
i know that i can expect entertainment and your cheerfulness
both of you show me how to forget my accumulating years

murphy determined to enjoy life despite all hindrance
2/2/2009 10:04 AM

von zach XVII,1

a traveler visits me

in my old age in these mountains i have lost all my ambition
i sit here for the duration on the shore of the big river
in this backwater i forget to bathe or to comb my hair
but when a guest appears i quit my reading or playing the lute

i offer the visitor the basket of fruit hanging on the wall
i call my son to bring out some cooked fish to eat
i often hear these guests approach in their row-boats
and know they wish to stop by and visit my rough hut

murphy a true indian in his hospitality
2/2/2009 10:12 AM

von zach XVII,2

the official of the rice warehouse, meng, comes by foot to visit me. he brings full jugs of wine
and soy sauce

you have walked along the shore of the chu river to visit me
we sit on the bank and look out over the evening hills
you have brought sweet rice, along with jugs of wine
and a jar of soy sauce that is so full it has slightly spilled over

now with a simple dish of rice i can add this fragrant soy
now with this wine i may make my guest as drunk as a jelly fish
one is never free from the need for the essentials of life
you must tell my wife how to prepare this sauce and brew this wine

murphy living on the kindness of friends
2/2/2009 10:21 AM

von zach XVII,3

i ask my young servant to sweep clean the orchard north of my house, and then to put there my
easy chair, 3 poems (1 of 3)

i would like to move my sickbed out of my reed hut
but first i must have the orchard cleaned of all weeds and debris
i love to sit outside my house in this backwater
poetic inspiration runs pure and deep in my repose

a grouse preens loudly looking for a mate in these lonely mountains
sociable monkeys above would walk the shore around if only they could
the moving clouds float aimless with just a breath of fresh wind
i rest quietly next to my table and succeed in banishing my worries

murphy serendipitously approaching true satori
2/2/2009 10:32 AM

von zach XVII,4

i ask my young servant to sweep clean the orchard north of my house, and then to put there my
easy chair, 3 poems (2 of 3)

in every valley early autumn brings forth cool winds
the morning fogs dispel slowly into the woods
caterpillars seek the sun on the limbs extremities
fruits ripen and fall to mix with the mouldering wastes

i am different from the local people but i try to fit in
i am much more comfortable with animals as was zhuang-zi
i sit here and hum poetry to myself as i look around
i follow my thoughts, feel contented, eventually loosen my headscarf

murphy finally having found his place in life
2/2/2009 2:15 PM

von zach XVII,5

i ask my young servant to sweep clean the orchard north of my house, and then to put there my
easy chair, 3 poems (3 of 3)

my hedge beside the stream has become scraggly and weak
the gate now sags and has ceased to close properly
and even more bedraggled is the shore line
the sand erodes and the edge collapses more and more

the cold autumn water glistens without surcease
the echoes from the desolate mountains bring a certain sadness
the horizon begins to darken and i bestir myself to move
i clamber to stand with my cane and begin to move to the hut

murphy plotzed in desuetude
2/2/2009 2:25 PM

von zach XVII,6

on the shore of the yang river

i am stuck here far from home in the yang-zi gorges
i live on this tributary together with a few indigenous families
on the narrow shore there is an abundance of moss
while under the autumn bamboo isolated flowers are hidden

here in this borderland the people have no wells and drink river water
the rice in the fields is very sandy and must be washed carefully
sometimes an imperial commissioner's ship stops nearby on the big river
then i have the opportunity to hear about the goings-on in chang-an

murphy making the best of a bad lot
2/3/2009 9:23 AM

von zach XVII,7

midnight

at midnight quiet rules by the stream and in the mountains
from the high tower in kui-zhou i think of chang-an
i have been here for a long time far from the capital
ashamed that in my whole life i could not be useful for the emperor

in chang-an there is constant change as in the movement of clouds
and much of the country is covered with the dust of the battles
an-lu-shan in his outrage proved unworthy of the imperial mercy
how pitiful the plight of the people who merely desire peace

murphy turning over dark thoughts in his mind
2/3/2009 9:31 AM

von zach XVII,8

new grief, twelve short poems (1 of 12)

although in this remote place the smoke of human habitation rises
tigers come around every day leaving their footprints as they pass by
falcons circle overhead searching for prey in the high grass
all the boats i see have difficulty rowing upstream to reach this place

murphy acutely aware of the surrounding fauna
2/3/2009 9:45 AM

von zach XVII,9

new grief, twelve short poems (2 of 12)

the fishing boats have moved their lines for the evening
at dusk crows in large numbers return to their nests
the emerging moon is close to becoming its fullest
thin clouds cover the entire sky in a filmy gauze

murphy at one with his surroundings
2/3/2009 9:50 AM

von zach XVII,10

new grief, twelve short poems (3 of 12)

everywhere in this entire region the war with the rebels goes on
how different can it be in the native country i have left
the last time i returned to lo-yang i found but a few friends
most likely most of the missing have fallen on the battlefields

murphy counting the losses after the epidemic
2/3/2009 9:55 AM

von zach XVII,11

new grief, twelve short poems (4 of 12)

i admit that i continue to feel i am a ministerial official
and therefore must return home to assume my duties
though the way there after all these years be hidden by tall grass
and due to feeble old age i will not be able to find my way there

murphy still feeling the tight bit of office
2/3/2009 4:58 PM

von zach XVII,12

new grief, twelve short poems (5 of 12)

everywhere one sees arrowheads wrapped with gold threads
amid the flagstuffs decorated with black ox-tails
i have flinched from these sights since the rioting began
since i have been on this incessant hard traveling life

murphy watching the populace as well as the animals
2/4/2009 9:55 AM

von zach XVII,13

new grief, twelve short poems (6 of 12)

in the zheng-guan period crossbows were decorated with copper and ivory
in the kai-yuan colorful animals were drawn on each man's shield
the small arrows of the uighur are good to be re-used against them
and now the battlefields are covered with these bloody weapons

murphy using anything which comes to hand when he gets angry
2/4/2009 10:07 AM

von zach XVII,14

new grief, twelve short poems (7 of 12)

the barbarians from central asia are still strong and numerous
and it is true to say that the battles continue apace
for if you go to the small towns and talk to the people
they think they can become rich and famous through fighting

murphy talking his students out of their fantasy of a career in professional sports
2/4/2009 10:14 AM

von zach XVII,15

new grief, twelve short poems (8 of 12)

these days only the best war horses parade before the drum carriage
no longer are the stunted horses pressed into this service
now there is no difficulty in fighting the robbers of he-bei
the generals no longer fight among themselves for the honor

murphy sitting in the stands at the annual harvard-yale game
2/5/2009 9:35 AM

von zach XVII,16

new grief, twelve short poems (9 of 12)

the rice transported from giang-su and an-hui pass by
the soldiers of the imperial palace desire more and more
there was never such a large number of courageous warriors defending chang-an
why has the emperor ioncresed their number so dramatically

murphy as the manager keeping score for the junior high basketball game
2/5/2009 9:41 AM

von zach XVII,17

new grief, twelve short poems (10 of 12)

although fall has come to these shores of the big river
the hot summer clouds have not yet disbanded
the trees on the wu mountains maintain their full foliage
and the oriole still sings in the woods of this southern region

murphy counting what few blessings he can find in these troubled times
2/5/2009 9:45 AM

von zach XVII,18

new grief, twelve short poems (11 of 12)

it has always annoyed me that tao the district judge of peng-ze
never buys wine at the time of the blossoming chrysanthemums
the ninth day of the ninth month is now approaching
and i must borrow money to provide wine for the celebration

murphy always leaving more than he takes
05.02.2009 09:49

von zach XVII,19

new grief, twelve short poems (12 of 12)

although my illness has improved my poems are as simple minded as ever
here i have already painted eleven poems and am still not finished
i understand that like jiang-zong i am too old for service
though i still carry the silver signet given me by the emperor

murphy cleaning his closet and finding his long lost harvard diploma
2/5/2009 9:55 AM

von zach XVII,20

leafless

leafless the trees of the wu mountains at the end of the year
the cold stream flows ever northeast without me
from within the fog comes the sound of war drums
there are few ships out on the wind-tossed waves

i am like wang-xi-zhi who copied the dao-de-jing for a swan
i am like su-qin whose fur coat became tattered on his far flung travels
i have ever sought to repay my debts to my illustrious masters
but i am sick and destitute in my hut and cold autumn has arrived once more

murphy dreading the coming rigors of winter
2/16/2009 9:32 AM

von zach XVII,21

on the ninth day of the ninth month, 5 poems, (1 of 5)

today at the chong-yong festival i drink my wine from a mug
in spite of my illness i struggle up, climb to the tower on the shore of the stream
a frail old man i don't abuse wine much anymore although it still offers solace
now is the time for the chrysanthemums to bloom and then they will stop for another season

here where i am far away from home when the sun sets black monkeys start to cry
in this time just before the first frost in my old country the wild geese have arrived
i have no news from my brothers and sisters, they have scattered because of the eternal riots
i too am beset by the terrors of the war and my senile decay prevents my seeking my kin

murphy watching all his options slowly disappear
2/17/2009 9:29 AM

von zach XVII,22

on the ninth day of the ninth month, 5 poems, (2 of 5)

when once i was young i drank heavily on the ninth day of the ninth month
i consumed mug after mug of wine and the mug was never set aside
now sadly at this time of the chrysanthemums my hair has turned white at my temples
and i am ashamed of only drinking a small amount of wine

my heart longs incessantly for the northern emperor's court
here in kui-zhou i turn my head constantly to gaze in the direction of the capital
today all the court officials receive evodia branches to ward off misfortune
unfortunately that custom is not practiced here and i get none

murphy bemoaning his loss of vigor
2/17/2009 9:41 AM

von zach XVII,23

on the ninth day of the ninth month, 5 poems, (3 of 5)

in earlier times i spent this day with su-yuan-ming
and in the society of our mutual friend zheng-qian
we picked chrysanthemums to infuse our wine
everyone who was there became exceedingly drunk

we staggered out to lean on the trees in the forest
and awoke from our stupor to the pounding of washing stones
for me these joys have disappeared forever
i watch a lonely cloud and think of both my dead friends

murphy replete with age and sad memories
2/18/2009 10:34 AM

von zach XVII,24

on the ninth day of the ninth month, 5 poems, (4 of 5)

as a young man in my old village i celebrated the beautiful chrysanthemums of fan-quan
they flourished by a spring which fed the zhan river in the mountains
as i have greeted the cheerful villagers the last few days
i continue to think of how few of my youthful friends still live

the wu mountains writhe along the twisting big river
the zhong-nan mountains lie before the southern gates of the chang-an
many miles away from the capital i am bound to the yang-zi's shores
i lie abed in my illness and tears furrow my cheeks

as my stay lengthens i have begun to wear the black hat of the hermit
i allow my son to bring me a mug of wine before i go to the party
if i see only rebels at the festivities my grief will be overpowering
how can i bear up under my deep pain and depression

murphy teary in his wistful eye of memory
2/18/2009 10:45 AM

von zach XVII,25

on the ninth day of the ninth month, 5 poems, (5 of 5)

the cloudless winds of autumn roars across the heavens
the gibbons bitter cries emanate from the forests
the clear waters of autumn flow past the white sandy shore
the water birds circle high above the rippling currents

the dried leaves of fall add the rasping sound of their rustle
all the sap of life has retreated for the long spell of winter
along the shore the floods of the stream tear at the sands
the wind and the waters tearing at the fabric of life

here far away from my home and native country
i complain about the inevitable passing of the seasons
my entire life i have been afflicted with sickness
and now i climb here to the tower alone without friends

the rebellion and riots have embittered my life
my hair has turned completely white in my grief
thinking about the unfortunate turns in my life
i have momentarily set aside my heavy mug of wine

murphy moved to melancholy and aching with arthritis
2/18/2009 11:03 AM

von zach XVII,26

in the village by the stream the last month of autumn

the village has been tucked under these ridges since olden times
on the sparse hedge by my hut wild ivy has grown
i spend my idle days playing soft music on my lute
my white head turns often to gaze at the sky

on the plates set before me are heavy yellow oranges
i have balanced my bed with a round brocade stone under its foot
and though it is lonely here far from my native haunts
i would be hard put to find a place with nicer scenery

murphy making the best of a diminished position on his go board
2/18/2009 5:19 PM

von zach XVII,27

in the third autumn month i host a banquet (1 of 3)

the torrents of the yang-zi flood beneath the steep gorges
here high on the tower the moon is exceedingly bright
it is a rare occasion for such a group to gather here tonight
seldom do we meet others so far from the capital chang-an

the stars of the milky way will soon disappear with the morning
and we will be left with the remnants of autumn in bo-di-cheng
i am an old man who must pay for the sin of overdrinking as a youth
i sit here stiffly and watch all the others refill then empty their mugs

murphy as always the gracious host
2/19/2009 9:55 AM

von zach XVII,28

in the third autumn month i host a banquet (2 of 3)

after climbing to these heights the autumn moon is always nice
the thin clouds up here do not hide its glorious light
i look out over the now silvery wide borderlands
and cannot help but think of the seat of power in chang-an

but here the moon sparkles on the wine in the mugs
it has risen to its height along the milky way
we all decide to forego sleep and watch the white lunar hare
only now and then to nod out as our black silk caps fall off

murphy refusing to give in to his weariness as he dances the night away
2/19/2009 10:03 AM

von zach XVII,29

in the third autumn month i host a banquet (3 of 3)

how can one gaze at the moon without drinking wine
especially from the high tower looking over the big river
when i listen to the songs i suddenly remember my white hair
when i am tempted to dance i am shamed by my age and retire

i watch you empty mug after mug til morning comes
and we look out on the water to see the gulls swimming in pairs
i am uncommonly glad that you all have become drunk
and my weakened heart concedes you can drink better than me

murphy revisiting exhilaration in his bank of memories
2/19/2009 10:15 AM

von zach XVII,30

returning in the evening

the frost has begun to turn the green leaves of the wu-tung tree yellow
a white crane has found itself a roosting place in its limbs
i hear the rattle of the night watchman in bo-di-cheng
and through it all i hear the plaintive caw of a raven

i, the stranger, return to my hut in the evening
i enter my hut just as the moon brings its shining light
how far off is the silk being pounded on the washing stones
the sounds of the sad labor carried here on the wind

i would like to cross the kui river to the southeast
but i no longer have a row boat to carry me there
i would return with pleasure to the rivers of shen-si
but the rioting continues there unabated

i have already passed fifty years in my life
as i sit here still dissatisfied with my situation
tomorrow morning i shall stand on the floor of my hut
look up to the clouds and think again of my native country

murphy caught in a rut with no way to joggle his wagon to escape it
2/23/2009 9:24 AM

von zach XVII,31

i escort the manager of the granaries meng, twelfth of his clan, as he travels for an audit in lo-
yang

you, sir, are leaving your old mother on a trip to conduct an audit
your worry about the poverty of your family will be answered by its success
you have waited for a long time here in kui-zhou for this invitation
your long stay here in the mountains has made you pale and thin

you leave just as the cold autumn winds blow through the bamboo of si-chuan
you should arrive in lo-yang just as the late snows land on the early plum blossoms
day and night i know you think of the health of your aged mother
and will return in your shining uniform as soon as possible to comfort her

murphy touching bases with all and sundry
2/23/2009 11:13 AM

von zach XVII, 32

i ask the manager of the granaries to visit my old village

since the rioting began i have lived in seclusion
and have not traveled back to the mountains of lo-yang
you must cross the high mountains for me to see my old village
and please do not beg off because of the difficulty of travel

now the north wind has begun to blow through the yellowing leaves
while this old white head sings songs of longing on the shores of the big river
ten years i have remained far from the capital as a hermit here
and my aging heart is filled with hurt at how far away i remain

murphy beating his breast while moaning
2/23/2009 1:46 PM

von zach XVII,33

growing deaf

i have long been in my life like the philosopher he-guan-zi
i live secluded in the mountains wrapped in deerskin
who knows how long before i begin to go blind
since last month my ears have gone quite deaf

the monkeys shout no longer moves me to tears
sadly i no longer hear the birds in the evening
if i see yellowed leaves fall from the trees
i ask my son in alarm if there is a roar of a north wind

murphy checking his receding gums and contemplating false teeth
2/24/2009 8:04 AM

von zach XVII,34

my small garden

my small garden lies on the shore of the nang river
where the chu people live, here in the wu gorge of the yang-zi
i have been sick and have stayed here growing my medicinal herbs
i bought this plot because of its beautiful flowers

now in the fall the ripe fruit falls from the courtyard trees
though as a result of the rains the shore of the river has been eroded
i ask my neighbors how i should go about repairing the seasonal damage
then i go to my room to finish this verse and wait for the spring

murphy making the best of his worsening situation
2/24/2009 8:14 AM

von zach XVII,35

the night

tonight a wild wind attacks the precipitous cliffs
in my cold room the light of the candle is small comfort
the monkeys on the ridge have found shelter from the frost
though the birds of the stream still fly into the darkness

i sit beside my good, strong sword
bemoan my impoverished state
the war still surrounds the emperor's palace
and under my white hairs still beats a patriotic heart

murphy remembering his athletic youth and trying to limber up by stretching
2/24/2009 8:23 AM

von zach XVII,36

respectfully i answer a poem from my old friend, judge xie, twelfth of his clan

i don't have a sense of the time i have spent here in the gorges
i know only that this sad autumn wind has brought me to my senses again
i notice a marvelous bird flying here from the west
it swoops down to me from its natural place in the winds

its plumage is snow white and it exists in a sad loneliness
it flies over to the small island half concealed by the clouds
it studies me from one of the trees and takes notice of my sympathy
it flies over to walk pitifully on my lonesome balcony

he seems to me the embodiment of a magnificent scholar
one who wishes to help me break free from my long sojourn here
his clear poem is to me like the melancholy sounds of precious stones
the ethics he develops reminds of the keenness of a freshly honed knife

i hear from this poem an echo of fan-li who destroyed the state of wu
it reminds of those of dou-xian chiseled on yan-ran mountain
why was the sword of chen-tang which killed the hun king zhi-zhi not renowned
although it was offered to the emperor he ignored its worth

it was your ambition to have your portrait raised in the unicorn gallery
you were not interested in conjugal joys behind the mother-of-pearl screen
yet the second zhao-wen-jun recently become a widow
she came from a rich house whose gate was always closed

there you appeared as another si-ma-xiang-ru with your literary talents
like the cattle shepherd and weaver stars you become a pair
when guests would appear at your house she retires to the kitchen
at the end of day she collects the beautiful fireflies

you and she do not need their light instead of a lamp
but she is urging you on in your study of the six classics
i, on the other hand, continue to scoop my own water from the river
and and constantly bemoan my fate as do the sighing leaves

i sigh because of my white hair and my lack therefore of an official position
while you look forward to obtaining your silver seal of authority
i am tied to bed here with a lingering illness with only mountain demons around
though i am accepted by the locals as a trusted countryman

i constantly long for the brocade bed of a court official
and am quite weary of the everlasting fish i am eating
the mighty river flows from the west to the east
passing through the gorges on its way to the eastern sea

i look up as suddenly the blue sky darkens
the storm and thunder chase the hundred spirits
i see a white tiger appearing in the heavens
led by a beautiful young woman with its red leash in her hands

the woman is the young daughter of the god of heaven
she rides a phoenix and her tears become the rain
she tells me she is friendly with prince xiang of chu
another ding-ling-wei said to have returned after a thousand years

now after a thousand years she still sheds her tears
and as i awaken from the dream i still smell her presence
i conclude from the dream that the love between two people
is like the imperishable shine of gold and precious gems

you, my old friend, should sit quietly there with your newwife
without choosing either the clear wei of the murky chang rivers
indeed the fighting against the rebel still rages throughout the land
blood is continually spilled and the ground soaks up its darkness

but now i hear that an illustrious monarch has assumed the throne
and he governs the empire applying a light welcoming hand
he wishes the metal of the arms be melted to become tools for the farm
and once more raises the prospect of a return to a just peace

think of king wen of zhou who was virtuous in his light approach
and how with time competent men came to fill the court once more
to achieve high official posts, however, one must be young and vigorous
you could not possibly be content to eat waterchestnuts as i do

murphy watching his contemporaries pass him by
2/25/2009 10:41 AM

von zach XVII,37

i escort confidential secretary li, eighth of his clan, as he leaves to the headquarters of minister
du-hong-jian in chang-an

your white houseboat with its blue windows has arrived here
you traveled down river from cheng-du-fu on your way to chang-an
now in the autumn the strength of the waves of the yang-zi
makes one think the skies and the earth are both in turmoil

you may notice the maple trees here protrude from the rocks
and you can hear their leaves as they fall in the waters
when your boat is moved further by its oars down the shore
you can point back at the blossoming chrysanthemums

you are driven to reach chang-an at the earliest time possible
so you have chosen to depart from here this very morning
you wish not to miss the time of your meeting with the minister
who has given you instructions to make all deliberate haste

a star from the extreme south in cheng-du-fu
proceeds north along the zodiac to the capital at chang-an
there appear the five-colored clouds presaging luck and peace
and there awaits your minister who waits like the san-tai star of the northern bushel

murphy reading the good news in the morning paper
2/26/2009 9:00 AM

von zach XVII,38

i dedicate this poem in thirty rhymes to confidential secretary li as i bid him good-bye in kui-zhou

in earlier times you held the office of yo-bu-que in the imperial cabinet
and in the new governmental period were always found in the emperor's suite
then the bloody tide of rebellion washed over the imperial residence
a baleful star fell on the hall of officials, and they scattered in panic

the six dragons pulling the emperor looked back with longing at chang-an
ten thousand riders accompanied the party to the birthplace of the emperor shu
in the dark north there the leadership of the empire was given to su-zong
even though those who fled wished only for emperor xuan-zong to return

fortuitously then courageous general guo-zi-yi won hardfought battles
and succeeded in recapturing both capitals freeing the people from their yoke
at that time you were in the entourage of the new emperor
and accompanied his phoenix wagon back to the capital at chang-an

the ascent to the throne by su-zong was different than that of han-wen-di
and you could take pleasure from being an agnate of the imperial house
the rebels were in the position of submission to the throne
and the entire world once more contemplated a time of rest and peace

at that time i worked with you as a talentless man as we were made censors
in this capacity we had to admonish the emperor and seize his gown to speak
i was remaindered then, as an underling in the censor's office
you were condemned as unicorn of perfection to the idleness of archiving

since then i have become quite ill as once was si-ma-xiang-ru
and i served only a short time with my friends as once did xi-kang
in my later travels i have had a great desire to see you again
i have been reminded over and over of the days of our youth

now i live in the wu gorges far from the wind-whipped fogs of chang-an
here even the ruins of the old palace of chu-xiang-wang are not to be found
when i look back on old times i have no-one to talk with
to raise my spirits i have only the new poems you have brought to me

now in the clear autumn when the grass wilts you finally come to kui-zhou
and here on the shore where we again separate lie fallen lotus leaves
rumors have it that the rioting has flared up once more in the land
you will surely be moved to sighs as you travel through the villages

the fighting continues to draw men from my neighboring districts
and continual drafts for more military assistance are being received
repeatedly general du-hong-jian has asked for your strategic wisdom
this while you were occupied with tending your garden of medical herbs

the general had an audience with the emperor in chang-an
he specifically asked for you to be assigned to him at this time
and as you know only when the riots are quelled in western si-chuan
will there be any hope for a decrease in all our worries

you will undoubtedly report to the court of the exhaustion of the troops
and the emptiness of the rice bowls of all the countryside
the deteriorating situation in si-chuan requires many more men
the emperor cannot afford to let these rioters continue unpunished

you will be given a magnificent horse to carry you and your golden saddlery
along with an imposing jade inkstone in the form of a tripod toad
you will travel in style because of the imperial mercy
and will surely receive many richly decorated brocades

on this journey you are assured of success since the timing is right
although as your friend i am unhappy to be unable to be by your side
your boat has now left and is on the way to the general
going with the floods now slowly, now quickly as they go

i sit here ill and exhausted from ladling water and threshing rice
i sit in exhausted misery like a lumberjack or fisherman
i beg for polished rice if good friends come to visit me
i copy my poems and give them to the officials who dun me for my taxes

i think longingly of my native country of du-ling lit by the setting sun
and the yue river of shen-si which is only cold mud at this time of year
if you should visit there do not tell them of the white hair
of this old man who cleans the wispy hairs entangled in his comb

murphy watching the continued success of his contemporaries
3/3/2009 10:07 AM

von zach XVII,39

respectfully i escort governor wei-zhi-jin governor of heng-zhou, newly appointed over-censor,
as he departs for hu-nan

you are in great favor with the emperor and will soon be recalled to the court
in these perilous times you will be used over and over as once was kou-xun
in hu-nan where you now go you will undoubtably show the cunning of han-xin
you will restore order there, as i remember you did here in kui-zhou as prefect

the dynasty still has many riots yet to be suppressed
and the hopes of the people ride with you as you quell them
you will emulate chen-fan who held the bed ready for xu-zhi
you will invite capable men to assist you with their efforts

murphy clapping dutifully at the end of the recital
3/3/2009 12:50 PM

von zach XVII,40

i hear that hui-zi comes to dong-xi

hui-zi has ridden in on a skinny white donkey
he is ill and brings his ailing body to dong-xi
the overarching sky has no eye of especial care
this competent man languishes in this desolate valley

here he partakes of mountain honey from a mature fir forest
he drinks filtered wine from a coarse wooden mug
in a wretched hut the course of his life is decided
he has as yet found no position in state service

murphy acknowledging that others suffer as much as does he
3/3/2009 1:04 PM

von zach XVII,41

the cloister of the exalted priest da-jue, who moved south of peng-li lake last winter

here in the wu mountains i no longer find you, the exalted priest
the one who is compared to the legendary hui-yuan in lu-shan
now here in the autumn evening there is a cool wind
in your old hermitage in the middle of the spruce forest

you left behind an elder to be in charge
he it is who earlier sounded the evening bells
the other priests are still without the walls
they must beg for their meals to maintain themselves

in lu-shan the incense kettle point where you now reside
casts a shadow on peng-li lake which lies at its foot
you live high on the top of this mountain near the stars
like once the immortal dung-feng lived in his apricot woods

when you were leaving from here last year
all the people in the district were moved to tears
when, oh when, will you return for a visit with us
so your pupils can show their love with a profusion of flowers

murphy recognizing the buddha when he manifests himself
3/4/2009 8:30 AM

von zach XVII,42

i move temporarily from my humble hut in nang-xi to a thatched hut in dong-tun (1 of 4)

i move to the north near the precipitous crags at the foot of yan mountain
the site is just to the east of the old town of chi-jia
there is a level stretch there lying along the river
all around the steep mountains rise to the heavens

fogs and frost pale the sun reaching down to this wilderness
just now the smell of the ripening rice is borne on heaven's wind
i fear my life resembles the tumbling thistle-down
so i shall sit quietly for a while in these cassia woods

murphy vainly trying to shield himself from the vagaries of existence
3/4/2009 9:05 AM

von zach XVII,43

i move temporarily from my humble hut in nang-xi to a thatched hut in dong-tun (2 of 4)

whether i find myself here in dong-tun or as before in nang-xi
i always seek a home which lies on the shore of a clear running stream
in both places i have only a reed thatched hut
but i will stay here since the rice is already ripe

that, and the fact that the market at nang-xi is quite noisy
here there is only a surrounding forest without a well trodden path
if anyone should wish to visit to debate this isolated old man
they would probably lose their way in this remote area

murphy finally tasting the true life of a hermit
3/4/2009 9:17 AM

von zach XVII,44

i move temporarily from my humble hut in nang-xi to a thatched hut in dong-tun (3 of 4)

not too far away, a bit to the north of here, lives the imperial commissioner feng
from his grand house one can view a great expanse of the river
i am thinking about creating a channel with small stones
i have already created a pond from the source of a pure spring

both my huts have the same viewpoint, woods behind, river in front
the huts resemble each other and both gates open toward the river
to make all the land here productive again will take much time and effort
in what year i can untie my boat again i do not know

murphy once more drowning in the details of his current existence
3/4/2009 9:26 AM

von zach XVII,45

i move temporarily from my humble hut in nang-xi to a thatched hut in dong-tun (4 of 4)

i have been in isolation for a long time and far from chang-an
i am now in the upper reaches of the big river near commissioner feng's farm
for a long while i walked around the area of kui-zhou
now i lie ill in a hut in the lonely mountains of chu

i have come here because of my love of quiet and seclusion
i am living now far from the bustle of the ju-tang gorge
in the cold air i view the miracle of regular rows of flying geese
i turn toward chang-an and think of the time i served there as an official

murphy wondering how one might identify shangri-la
3/4/2009 9:37 AM

von zach XVII,46

verses which i send to young nobleman wu, the chief of police

i hear from a passing neighbor of your presence
you have come here by boat from zhong-zhou
i send a rider to seek you out with an invitation
you should visit me here in my nang-xi reed hut

i have opened this old hut in its out of the way place
i chose it for that very reason, its isolation
i especially invite you to stay over if you desire
you might need a resting place from your duties

in the mornings here the sun glistens between the high peaks
the wind makes a wonderful sougning noise through the trees
in the autumn the river develops storm tossed waves
which have caused havoc for many a passing sailor

we have much to discuss as we are related by marriage
it would be fitting for us to sit and have a long conversation
it will be especially pleasant to sit at my high window
and ease some of my gloomy thoughts while talking with you

murphy always the family politician
3/4/2009 11:17 AM

von zach XVII,47

another message for master wu

i have always known about your loss of fruit
my western neighbor has taken your dates before they fall
she is a single woman with no means of support
if she were not in such need she would not do such a thing

she is understandably fearful of strangers
but with us she can be approached if we do it gently
if you erect a thorny hedge however
she will believe it is aimed solely at her

this woman confided in me when we talked earlier
how much the taxes have caused her grief
when i think how the war afflicts such innocent people
i drench my kerchief with copious tears

murphy as always identifying with the underlings in the heirarchy
3/5/2009 8:02 AM

von zach XVII,48

i write these poems on the walls of the villa of the nephew of minister bo-zhen-jia (1 of 2)

your uncle is a man of high standing from a respected family
and you, his nephew, glitter like a tree of precious stones
in your mountain villa you study the classics of literature
you devote yourself to the high art of writing poetry

here near kui-zhou i will spend the rest of my life
here in the high woods i feel i have won you as a friend
you play for me the melancholy shi-kuang of the shining snow
and it is not any man but only a connoisseur you would allow to listen

murphy seeking out the talent in his neighborhood
3/5/2009 8:18 AM

von zach XVII,49

i write these poems on the walls of the villa of the nephew of minister bo-zhen-jia (2 of 2)

a cold creek runs in front of your mountain villa
a hedge surrounds, fluffy white clouds float above
here near the tiger caves in the mountain
you have sought quietude and left the bustle behind

your paint brush stands are in the open window wet by the rain
your book titles become illuminated by the rays of the setting sun
you are as happy as well fed 1000 mile horses aknicker
you indulge all of your well burnished talents

murphy surrounding himself with young prodigies
3/5/2009 8:28 AM

von zach XVIII,50

the retreat of mountain hermit tan who answered the appeal the emperor

you are famous here like the old man of the extreme south
the one who always insisted on being out under the stars
will you reprove someone in your writings as once did kong-zhi
when he also answered the appeal of the emperor

you have chosen to go to the palace of the emperor as asked
leaving behind this place with only its spruces and chrysanthemums
in this valley of the crying mountain torrent all light has left with you
your hermitage stands abandoned and desolate

you should be careful in your choice of how you travel
which places to stay and whether you should walk or ride
to go as an official in a proud state coach with four horses
brings with it a heightened degree of danger

i stand here alone now, under the sky of autumn
with only the still green mountain, and without you

murphy watching a moth fly closer and closer to the candle
3/6/2009 8:05 AM

von zach XVII,51

the reed hut of state secretary bo

you were given the silver fish insignia of your office
and you have burnished its dignity here in the green mountains
the early lessons of your upbringing hav gone away
and you have prospered and clung tightly here on the cliff wall

in ancient writings about literature there is one dung-fang-sun
he thought it sufficient to study only the three winter months
you are reminiscent of him since in only a short time
you have already read ten thousand books and are still quite young

bright clouds hover over your reed hut now
they clot thickly like a sloping canopy over a cart
the autumn waters rush by close to your stairs
it is as if the canal had overflowed its banks

you well know that wealth and respect are sorely earned
great diligence and effort are needed, as you have done
if a man truly wishes to succeed he must continue to read
to read and understand even five cartloads of books

murphy listening to his faculty advisor at harvard
3/6/2009 8:27 AM

von zach XVII,52

a moonlit night in dong-tun

after continued wanderings i live here now tormented by disease
here where since ancient times rice has been grown for the border army
during the field work in the spring i follow the peculiar ways of the natives
i live in this reed hut far from other people and their noise

the frost spirits have brought their bitter cold and storms
floods in the gorges cover even the brown cow rock
the prints of fighting tigers remain in the frozen mud
the moon hangs over the village and this stranger's grief

the tall trees with bare limbs let the moonlight through
light clouds rise above the delicate columns of rock
again i am startled to hear birds calling under the full moon
i fall asleep for a moment and wake to the shrieks of monkeys

the sun rolls up and brings the east to brightness
a morning wind rises, clouds form to slowly float over me
in this cold there is never a proper sleep
so i do not even get to dream of returning home

murphy waiting out his remaining days and nights
3/6/2009 9:18 AM

von zach XVII,53

the northern mountain village on the dong-tun plain

as a result of the riots and the bandits
live here is difficult, with oppressive taxes
i walk through the village and see only birds
from noon to sundown i have seen no one

i wander through the desolate valley facing its winds
when i look up at the spruce trees dew drips down on me
when i turn my head to view the distant mountains
i see faint swirls of dust rise above the battlefields

murphy restless and pacing around in his misery
3/6/2009 9:28 AM

von zach XVII,54

night (1 of 2)

half the first month is gone as the crescent moon sets
the candles are half gone, it is the middle of the night
i hear deer barking in the mountains without rest
startled cicadas suddenly begin to fly among the trees

for a time i think of home and long for my old friends
as once wang-hui-zhi wished to visit his snow bound friends
the loud singing of the barbarians rings through the darkness
i am not at home here in the far west of the world

murphy thinking about discarded old habits of being
3/6/2009 1:38 PM

von zach XVII,55

night (2 of 2)

this evening a sad trumpet sounded from the city walls
a few birds flew over the city returning to their nests
the war and riots have lasted for a very long time
to escape the tax officials the farmers don't return until late at night

leaves fall down the cliff from trees high overhead
the bright milky way is beginning to become faint
the big dipper has turned and night is almost over
as i watch the the moon sink magpies make their presence known

murphy sleepless; and, as always, worried
3/6/2009 2:16 PM

von zach XVII,56

in my reed hut i supervise the rice harvest (1 of 2)

at the end of the third month of autumn it is time
the flat fields are full of ripe, fragrant rice
i enjoy being in a broad area with few homes
the views of the high mountains are marvelous

although i wear padded garments i am still cold
though when i taste the new rice i have to smile
the fresh red rice is now here for everyone's enjoyment
and even a modicum of white rice is ready to eat

murphy close to the soil and the wheel of the seasons
3/8/2009 9:24 AM

von zach XVII,57

in my reed hut i supervise the rice harvest (2 of 2)

by steaming the fresh rice becomes white and edible
adding fresh steamed mallow herbs makes a tasty dish
who argues that plain rice grains alone would satisfy me
as an old man i also need the soft mallows

the rice i planted here in kui-zhou is now ripe
and reminds me of the rice i once grew in he-nan
there is no need to serve this rice in a white dish
it sports its silvery color enough to satisfy the eye

murphy always and forever the cook for the family
3/8/2009 9:38 AM

von zach XVII,58

autumn fields (1 of 5)

this autumn the landscape looks even more forbidding
as the cold stream tosses its waves to touch the sky
my boat is still tied up in the min mountains
as i have located an apartment in a village of chu

i will leave the ripe date trees hanging over the barn
i will, however, weed and look after the hollyhocks
i eat these mallows when tender as do many old men
and that which i do not want i feed to the fish

murphy thinking about softer foods as his teeth slowly disappear one by one
3/8/2009 12:07 PM

von zach XVII,59

autumn fields (2 of 5)

it is easy to begin to understand the ways of an individual life
but to fashion one's life on the lessons of all nature is demanding
the old wise fish are mostly found in the deeper waters
the bird returns to its nest deep within the lush forests

i have grown old and am afflicted with poverty and disease
frustration and worries attack my sense of dignity and respect
yet as the autumn wind blows over my desk i take my cane out for a walk
i do not tire of gathering and eating the ferns of these northern mountains

murphy realizing his hair growing white is snow on his dome
3/8/2009 12:28 PM

von zach XVII,60

autumn fields (3 of 5)

i try to study the confucian classics to better myself
but the views of mountains and forests continue to beguile
when i turn my head to see the vista my silk cap slips sideways
i turn my back to be warmed by the sun while i read

with this autumn wind pine cones are falling, which i will gather
as the weather gets colder i will take honey from the hives
here and there i see small clusters of late flowers
i linger in their vicinity absorbed by their light fragrance

murphy baring his skin for the refreshing breeze
3/9/2009 8:07 AM

von zach XVII,61

autumn fields (4 of 5)

in the fall the sands along the far shore gleam their whiteness
the evening sun reddens the peaks of the high mountains
beneath the choppy waves the fish still part the waters
the birds still cut through the gusty winds to return to the forest

the sound of pounding clothes echoes on the river
the thocks of the lumberjacks beat down from the woods
in the pervasive cold i keep warm the best i can
far from the emperor i cannot count on his gift of a blanket

murphy stretchng out his final days
3/9/2009 8:17 AM

von zach XVII,62

autumn fields (5 of 5)

in my ambitious youth i wished to earn a portrait in the unicorn gallery
but now i am old and sick and unfit for service as an official
in the autumn the river has swollen to its flood stage
at night i listen to it roar through the barren canyons

the path to my hut is hidden by the piles of fallen rocks
yet i still look for the sail which will carry me home
my sons have learned to speak the language of these barbarians
how can they ever expect to rise to high official positions

murphy rubbing his three day stubble at the breakfast table
3/9/2009 8:30 AM

von zach XVII,63

an autumn lament

few people live here in this remote village
only a few birds fly up into the high mountains
now that it is autumn i have put away my painted fans
i am in a foreign land and will keep my gate closed

in my growing laziness i rarely comb my hair
i grow frail from constant worries and have tightened my belt
the generals think only of winning battles
while the emperor thinks only of the military

the white water grass has been torn up by the storms
the reddened leaves of the willow continue to fall
when will the rebels lose enough men to stop fighting
then maybe i can begin to find my way hme

murphy accepting the lesson of a decaying fall
3/9/2009 9:20 AM

von zach XVII,64

the rains

in these mountains these steady rains bring no mud
the clouds above the stream gradually thin into fog
a crane flies by at half the height of the mountain chain
the trees on the far shore toss their limbs in the wind

the island in the river can now barely be seen
it appears and disappears as does the mountain wall
to dispel my worsening mood i will go for a short walk
thankfully everything i can see interests me

due to my diabetes i sit long hours on my cushion
because i have been long tied to my bed, my shoes have grown dusty
i find no sedan chair available here in this country
i trust i will be able to wend my way home

everywhere in the countryside the battles are still raging
and i know the rebels are my implacable enemies
i continue to live through sad moon after sad moon
years have now passed in my continuing afflictions

i treat my illness with acupuncture and moxa and see few friends
i have only bad rice with which to feed my children
my entire life i have looked for friendly faces
and bit by bit having them become old friends

but weak and emaciated it is difficult for me to receive guests
i always fear that after a short time i will be unable to be a proper host
i fear i am unable to perform the small hospitable rituals
so i have come to accept my solitude and its simple ways

pang-de-gong finally came to accept walking alone
in the latter days of his life he was only seldom seen
now i can only wait for the cold autumn to come to dong-ting lake
then the waters of the xiao and xiang rivers will become clear

then i can hobble with my cane to clamber into a boat
then this white-haired toothless old man can venture out again

murphy finally accepting a diminished existence
3/9/2009 9:47 AM

von zach XVII,65

autumn coolness

the autumn has brought its usual welcome coolness
my lungs are better and i can comb my white hair again
i have grown weary of the continuous doses of my medicines
and i note with alarm the clutter and debris in the courtyard

having had everything swept and cleaned i can welcome guests
i compose a verse about my beloved bamboo, ask my son to record it
in this tenth month the waters of the big river flow smoothly
i can summon a light boat and go where i please

murphy feeling hospitable once again
3/9/2009 10:01 AM

von zach XVII,66

the two cliff walls of the ju-tang gorge

where among along the yang-zi is true grandeur found
it is at the famous entrance of the ju-tang gorge
the rocks on either side soar strictly straight up
while their foundations plunge deep into the waters

on the rocks are monkeys with beards like ancient old men
while inaccessible caves of the dragons can be seen
xi-he drives his solar cart down by these rocks every winter
and i am always afraid that he comes too close and falls out

murphy indulging in a little personal mythology
3/9/2009 10:16 AM

von zach XVII,67

the dark night

after the sun sets the mountains are swallowed by darkness
though the mists penetrate to the light of my candles
cattle and sheep have found their way home on dangerous paths
the birds have flown their way to their nests hidden in the trees

i adjust my cushion so i can see the glimmer of my sword
i bundle my books and stumble through the darkness to put them away
i take the candle into the courtyard to close the outer gate
the rhythmic beats on the washing stones are so clear i see them in my mind

murphy the old codger becoming too set in his ways
3/9/2009 10:31 AM

von zach XVII,68

clouds

dragons always gather in the ju-tang gorge
the big river is especially deep at bo-di-cheng
clouds rise from these deep waters most of the year
fill the canyons and penetrate deep into the forests

in the autumn after harvesting, however, they thin somewhat
they lift above the the cold frosty banks and return in the evening
i always chose a hut in the heights above the river
where the beauty of the clouds could uplift my anxious heart

murphy practicing feng shui without conscious effort
3/9/2009 2:37 PM

von zach XVII,69

morning rain

beginning at dawn there comes a light rain
at first i only hear it strike the leaves
only when the sky darkens can you hear it strike the ground
clouds have brought with them a heavier downpour

for a short time i saw the color of the judas tree shine
dust washes away and the birds and beasts find shelter
at noon half the mountain is covered in mist
it remains difficult to see anything clearly

murphy having nothing else to do but watch the silent woods
3/9/2009 2:47 PM

von zach XVII,70

the sky pond in kui-zhou

one cannot ride a horse to the sky pond
only a bird can visit there with ease
it is several hundred acres in size up next to heaven
its deep waters are ringed by brilliant white rock

from its watery depths beautiful clouds are born
its lonely waters moisten the high cold sky
it lies directly across from the wu-shan gorges
and might lead one to suspect it is also the work of da yu

the pond never dries up so dragons have been here forever
water chestnuts and prickly water lilies abound
this area has fierce thunderstorms which bring great darkness
yet the red glint of morning sun is beheld here first

here the same rain falls which the wu-shan fairy was changed into
here also one finds the wind that once blew against duke xiang of chu
i would ask yan-zun if this rock supports the loom of the weaver constellation
sometimes being here i think i stand before the treasure palace of the river god

in autumn i am always surprised to see the wild geese fleeing the cold
they remind me that ten thousand miles away my old friends are fishing
and i am moved to think that possibly here at this deserted site
i should build my hermit's hut to contain this weak old body

murphy wanting to flee to the hills to indulge himself as he grows old
3/17/2009 8:23 AM

von zach XVII,71

an occasional poem

my lonely reed hut lies in the midst of the mountains at the end of the world
i look out now on stormy waves of the big river through a darkening rain
i would fish for a pair of white fish to eat but perforce cannot
my oranges are still green and immature and i have nothing left to eat

i am like si-ma-xiang-ru when he was ridden with illness
i am too weak now to even rise and hobble about
i am like ruan-ji who is in despair at the end of his road
yet as was he i am still searching for a way to continue

i have not heard yet whether the emperor has decided
he should committ his crack troops encamped at chang-an
my heart is torn when i think of the murky waters of the jing river
the unrest which is in that district grows fiercer each day

murphy, fever ridden, jotting down his gloomy thoughts
3/17/2009 8:39 AM

von zach XVII,72

i sit alone, two poems, (1 of 2)

this entire day has been one of strong dark rain
the two walls of the ju-tang gorge loom a forbidding black
the flowers on the edge of the waters are blown by the wind
they fly up to my yard like evening mountain birds

this old man needs a rich wife to enrich his continuing life
i am tired now and think only of the waterchestnuts from chu
from the tower walls of the bo-di-cheng fortress trumpets sound
their mournful notes are unbearable to hear in my melancholy

murphy coming close to terminal despair
3/17/2009 8:51 AM

von zach XVII,73

i sit alone, two poems, (2 of 2)

the gorge of the white dog is located northeast of here
the canyon of the brown cattle lies off more to the east
the clouds high above reflect light down into the dark canyons
when the sun appears above the waters strong winds always rise

i am content at the moment to dry my herbs in the sun
but i also try to teach the young boy how to greet guests at the gate
i know i cannot make it to the door when i should
and i am angry that in my growing deafness i cannot hear guests arrive

murphy noting how his faculties slowly wither away
3/17/2009 8:58 AM

von zach XVII,74

rain, four poems, (1 of 4)

the light rains have made the roads even more slippery
wisps of clouds drift away from the thick central mass
when the cloud's shadows pass the cliff walls are purplish black
when the clouds separate the white birds gleam against the blue sky

the heavy rain no longer obscures the emergent autumn sun
though the sound of the cold waters remains the same as before
before my humble hut stands a small country mill
it continues to thresh the sweet smelling rice without pause

murphy taking stock of his environs as is his lifelong habit
3/17/2009 9:16 AM

von zach XVII,75

rain, four poems, (2 of 4)

the rain over the waters always comes unevenly
in the middle of good weather looms a light rain
the late autumn is cool because nature brings such rain
today the sun is late because of thickening clouds

because of the rain i unsaddle the horse and decide to stay home
i shall not become weary of watching the gulls at their play
i can see the yan-yue rock through my high window
its humid shine brings calm to this time in my study

murphy perfectly content to quietly sit in his favorite place
3/17/2009 9:29 AM

vonzach XVII,76

rain, four poems, (3 of 4)

surrounded here by the brilliant colors of yearly change
i am marooned at the end of the world in si-chuan
for a long while now the bitter north wind has complained
a cold rain continues its torrential, benumbing fall

because i am so sickly i eat little meat and drink less wine
my wife brings winter clothes to hang on this haggard frame
i have grown disconsolate in my continuing isolation
lately i have received only a few short letters from my friends

murphy unable to latch onto an uplifting thought
3/17/2009 9:39 AM

von zach XVII,77

rain, four poems, (4 of 4)

the rain here in the land of chu makes rock moss wet and slippery
i cannot travel and i cannot expect news to travel to me
i can only listen to the roaring of the wild buffalo in the mountains
and in the evening the plaintive cries of hunger from the gulls

the so called fairy headdress which grows along the stream is bedraggled
the thundering looms of the mermaids brings a sodden sadness
i cannot assuage my manifold sorrows by going for a walk
from morning til evening this maddening rain pours into the streams

murphy needing a blast of sunshine to brighten his eyes
3/17/2009 9:48 AM

von zach XVII,78

the red of sunset spreading east

the last rays of the setting sun illuminate the wu gorges
the cold half of the sky darkens, the other radiates red beauty
low lying yue-fu is already dark with a sliver of sun still seen
while the solitary peak of salt mountain seems to burn

white reeds on the shore of the big river seem as clear as autumn waters
the gate of my house leading to the spruce forest looks to be a painting
the cattle and sheep can no longer be seen in the gloaming
yet they answer my servants calls to return to their stalls

murphy luxuriating in a lambent light
3/17/2009 12:52 PM

von zach XVII,79

evening descends

my fields are located outside the lonely city of kui-zhou
they lie along the big river with its pounding wild waves
the sun disappears early behind surrounding high mountains
the mighty trees of the forest carry loud the noise of the wind

cranes fly down now to spend the night on the misty shores
chickens fly up to the roof of my thatched hut to roost
within the pool of candle light i make music and read
this is the only way i have found to make it through the bleak nights

murphy an elderly victim of diminished horizons
3/17/2009 1:02 PM

von zach XVII,80

thirtieth day of the ninth moon 767

i seem never to be able to end my days of wandering
my grief continues even as autumn ends this evening
here there are still miasmic vapors in the old kingdom of kui
though finally a light frost falls on the palace of the prince of chu

the grass on the mountain is still green as the kingfisher's feathers
and the petals of red flowers remain in the growing chill
autumn shows only a small withering of plants in this clime
it is quite unlike the ravages of fall in my old homeland

murphy with a persistent feeling of alienation
3/18/2009 8:38 AM

von zach XVII,81

first day of winter 767

unhealthy miasmas have still not completely disappeared
the winters in this place are not so difficult to bear
the sun still shines hotly on the rivers of ye-lang
only the winds through the canyons of bo-di-cheng are cold

today dumplings are being made in every household
my neighbor is kind enough to bring me some with sweet fillings
the traditions of this day are kept up here in these mountains
i console myself in my loneliness with this festive gift

murphy still not reconciled to the loneliness of old age
3/18/2009 8:52 AM

von zach XVII,82

joke verse in the manner of yuan-shu, written to dispel my anger (1 of 2)

i never cease to be amazed at the different customs in this country
it is really difficult for me to get along with these people
they all breed cormorants to help them with their fishing
and they all serve yellow fish at each and every meal

even the friends i first made here still show me improper conduct
and those i try newly to befriend seem to always shy away
to eke out my existence i have to farm and dig wells for myself
the locals keep me at arms length, there is no other choice

murphy an old pariah dog
3/18/2009 9:06 AM

von zach XVII,83

joke verse in the manner of yuan-shu, written to dispel my anger (2 of 2)

i first travelled from chang-an to the west where the black barbarians live
then i came here to the south near the bo-di cheng fortress
i find that tigers multiply the plight of strangers
and eating flour cakes delights and clears the mind

instead of using tortoise shells for divination, here they use stone bricks
and they resort to clearing fields by burning the brush and weeds
how does one choose right or wrong in such practices
one can only laugh at wanderlust which leads to such knowledge

murphy passing the test of his chinese friends by savoring hakka food
3/18/2009 10:52 AM

von zach XVII,84

i leave the reed hut near the post station in nang-xi to return to dong-tun (1 of 2)

i, this wayward traveller, wish to return to the yang-zi gorges
so i mount my horse on the banks of the river to ride there
i, much like wang-hui-zhi, do not stop along the way to visit with friends
i instead emulate shan-jian when he traveled to meet the xi family

i wind through the steep mountains surrounded by a blowing fog
yet despite the cold weather i see oranges and pomelos on the trees
i also note how the people are gathering the harvest on the threshing floor
i have come to value the traditional ways of the local populace

murphy the voyeur imagining himself within the scene
3/18/2009 11:06 AM

von zach XVII,85

i leave the reed hut near the post station in nang-xi to return to dong-tun (2 of 2)

at the end of the year it is difficult to get much sleep
there is much work to do and i force my feeble body to activity
though one of the treats of this time are roasted chestnuts
and one may shoot deer in the woods for a rich meal

i know that in this world friendship is only superficial
so i fear frequent visits of guests in my home
i am surrounded here only by occasional shepherds
and my few neighbors who are all simple farmers

murphy not yet a hermit but the trend is there
3/18/2009 2:54 PM

von zach XVII,86

i return to dong-tun after visiting bo-di-cheng

again i return to my ripened fields
the work of harvest not yet finished
when readying the threshing floor spare the ants
when finished leave gleanings for the village boys

every pestle should gleam white with rice
after husking the grains should be faintly red
now with this new rice we can eat more
even a thistledown like me desires a full granary

murphy adhering to the ingrained habits
3/19/2009 7:54 AM

von zach XVII,87

describing my feelings after the harvest

all the fields stand empty now with only reflections of clouds in the pools
it is low water and the river issues from an open stone gate
the cold wind blows as ever, stunting the surrounding plants
under the morning sun chickens and piglets seek food in the stubble

there is evidence of new fighting in this area, wounded arrive
the sound of the lumberjacks fades from the forest
there is no one around to ask how the war goes
i remain always and everywhere only a stranger

murphy stuck in a tiny backwater with no newspaper to read
3/19/2009 8:13 AM

von zach XVII,88

the arrival of under prefect liu

an honored guest arrives from the north for a visit
and answers my questions about the war situation
our generals are still in possession of the pass at han-gu-guan
our armies are still camped on the banks of the wei river

we continue to maintain our defense in the regions of han-dan
and we have restored our peace with the prince of the turfan
but only birds can penetrate the enemy districts of yan yu
while few enter shang-xian or shang-lo-xian because of the fighting

how can an old feeble man such as i serve my country
my despair at helping makes my sickness turn for the worse
the cold autumn sky stretches over both here and the imperial palace
i can only sit here with an aching heart under the same clear sky

murphy relegated to the bench in crunch time
3/19/2009 8:33 AM

von zach XVII,89

since the suppression

since the suppression of the revolt of the court eunuch lu-tai-yi
people of the southern coast have brought tribute for three years
though now living rhinoceri and kingfisher feathers are rarely delivered
it is feared that new fighting may erupt in the near future

even the wild tribes of xi-man have become restless
their hereditary chiefs no longer send envoys to the emperor
though their generals with skills like ma-yuan are still in chang-an
we should not allow our pride seduce us into a campaign against them

murphy as usual giving his opinion about any and everything
3/19/2009 10:02 AM

von zach XVII,90

during a continuing rain i wait for general wang who never comes

the hard rain continues and i am cooped up in my hut
in these desolate mountains there is nothing to relieve my loneliness
why is my friend so late like once the famous general bo-ji
i am disgruntled as i stare into the dark black clouds

from time to time the high winds slash through the trees
the cries of unhappy monkeys come from the forest
hungry storks and wild geese search the muddy banks for food
there is no indication that this weather will break

i believe there is little hope of ever meeting you again in this life
i remember you as a young man with a quiver of arrows at your belt
when we were in the forests hunting the snow-white deer
i loved to sit on their fur so we were searching for a fresh hide

i knew you would spare neither you horse nor yourself
no matter how high the mountain you would find a way
that rare animal ran with the speed of a shooting star
if only we could find five thousand cavalry men such as you

they would press forward to the front and end the world's troubles
the problematic situations facing the emperor would be resolved
i fear you will not be so used in such an endeavor, nor will your advice be heard
for you have been given no army with which to become victorious

now when chang-an is beset with evil miasma and shrouded in darkness
here in jing-nan there is only the bad omen of continuous thunder

murphy in his depressive state looking for the worst
3/20/2009 8:59 AM

von zach XVII,91

the story of the hu-ya rocks

the wind whips through the southern lands of si-chuan
heaven and earth have lost their natural colors and are pale and sad
high waves cover the waters of the yang-zi and han rivers
the hu-ya and tong-zhu rocks look ready to fall over

the dark recesses of the wu gorges are filled with a cold mist
the high mountains rise above the lonely shadows in the canyons
the cuckoo hides in his nest, monkeys shiver in the trees
mountain goblins moan as they cope with ice and snow

the old people of chu sigh waiting for the heat of summer to return
drawing a horn bow in this cold requires a two hundred weight pull
the steep prominent rock stands upriver of the city at the border
where gold flag poles reach up to pierce the cloud filled sky

the light cavalry of an-lu-shan hunts in the area of lo-yang
the chain armor of the turfan parade in chang-an
for ten years women have lost their men and weep bitterly
i, a lone wanderer in the distance, share in their grief

murphy painting a dismal winter scene
3/20/2009 10:20 AM

von zach XVII,92

i express my feelings (1 of 2)

all people between heaven and earth struggle
there is no place free from such a battle for life
from childhood on this tendency is evident
there is no escape from the tentacles of strife

if there were no royalty, lower classes could not complain
if there were no rich, contentment could be shared by the poor
dying and the bleaching of one's bones is inevitable
the joy of birth is too soon followed by wailing at death

it has been three years since this poor man came to kui-zhou
but this is but a moment, the span of the burning of a candle
i have been staying here to rest and to regain my health
i fear the troubles in the world, yet expect neither favor nor disgrace

could i be favored with a court rank at an advanced age
i need only a ration of husked rice with which to eke out my life
i have a thatch roof hut east of the bo-di-cheng fortress
the valley north of the mountains provides my medicinal herbs

i maintain my life now like a tree surrounded by ice and snow
i expect little or no future green branches to add a leafy crown
i did not plan to come to this place and this way of being
although i have always tended to favor places of solitude

a high scholar has an indomitable character taut as a bow string
a benighted fool is nothing more than an old bent branch
i seek not to judge my fellow creatures their rectitude
but only to warm my back in the sun midst woodcutters and farmers

murphy accepting the roll of the dice
3/20/2009 1:08 PM

von zach XVII,93

i express my feelings (2 of 2)

deep into the night i sit outside on the southern veranda
the bright moon shines and lights up my old knees
a sudden gust of wind and the milky way begins to fade
the tips of the mountains show the return of the sun

all the different living things have shared the night
the birds and animals now wake together at the dawn
i too rouse my children to get to work at their chores
we must provide for ourselves all that we need

because it is the cold season we see few travelers
at the end of the year the sun and the moon move quickly
in riotous times men become drunk seeking honor and glory
the world is in confusion like hair ridden with lice

in the days long before the onset of the three sovereigns
people were satisfied if only their bellies were filled
but when education and governments arose
humanity became trapped in their encompassing net

the first mistake was the invention of fire and the desire for cooked meals
then came the historian who inscribed both honor and evil
for is it not true that the lighting of lamps and candles
will attract many hundreds of moths to their flame

i let my mind soar beyond the earthly limits of this room
and all i see below are trifles men do not deserve
and finally i feel in harmony with all nature
as if death and life were both true paths to nirvana

murphy thinking long thoughts in the short nights of winter
3/21/2009 9:47 AM

von zach XVII,94

on seeing the sword dance of a pupil of madame gong-sun

introduction: in the second year of government of the da-li period (767 a.d.), the 19th day of the 10th month, i found myself in the house of yuan-chi, district secretary of kui-zhou, and saw the dances of lady li (12th of her clan) from lin-ying in he-nan, whose great art i admired. i asked her where she had prepared and she answered, "i am a student of madame gong-sun."

in the fifth year of the government of the wai-yuan period (717 a.d.), when i was yet a little boy, i found myself in yan-cheng in he-nan and i saw various dances of madame gong-sun filled with flowing rhythm, and she was very famous at the time.

her beautiful youthful face and shiny embroidered robes have long since disappeared. her student is also no longer young, and after i heard her story, i realized that between her art and that of madame gong-sun no difference existed. overwhelmed by memory i have tried to describe the experience.

once there was a beautiful woman, madame gong-sun
who was especially famous for her brilliant sword dance
audiences gathered to see her in mountains of expectant heaps
for they were to witness a struggle between heaven and earth

the rapidity of her movements reminded of the nine falling stars of prince yi
her elegance that of gods carried by chariots pulled by dragons through the sky
when she entered she brought the thunder of resentment and all fell silent
when she left she took with her the luminosity of the sun

now her red lips are closed, her embroidered sleeves stilled forever
long after her death her student brings back the tiger art of her presence
a beauty from lin-ying appears here at the fortress of bo-di-ching
once again the superb dances of lady gong-sun are seen

after i question the troupe and discover the origin of their skills
i think of the passage of time and my grief is aroused
there were 8000 dancers in the service of the late emperor ming-huang
of all of these the sword dance of lady gong-sun was the best

now fifty years have passed and it seems like it was overnight
the chaos of rebellion has darkened the emperor's palace
women of the pear garden school of opera were scattered as fallen leaves
now one of these beauties, the fair lady li, suffers the winter at bo-di-cheng

the young trees south of ming-huang's grave have grown thick in trunk
here in bo-di-cheng the grasses have withered in winter's cold
the festive feast, the music and dancing have come to their end
after a surfeit of joy melancholy settles over me as i watch the moon emerge

i am an old man who cannot seem to find a useful purpose
i have grown tired of this continual wandering while sad and lonely

murphy seeing tex ritter live at the saturday matinee in downtown Austin
3/23/2009 10:26 AM

von zach XVII,95

why do i sigh

as an old white haired man my ambition has long since vanished
it is time for others to carry the heavy load of imperial service
the rebels continue to bring their unrelenting, terrible turmoil
i am stuck here in the south with strangers far from chang-an

in the cold of winter i howl like a wretched monkey
like an old horse, i look longingly toward my home in chang-an
would that these black, hairy people of the south could enjoy peace
and the country be as it was in the wu-de and kai-yuan periods

murphy venting his spleen as is his wont
3/23/2009 10:46 AM

von zach VII,96

after a cold rainy night i go to visit the trees in my garden

around my humble hut i have planted nearly a thousand fruit trees
among them are red and yellow oranges not found in the north
i walk along the big river after the cold heavy rains have stopped
the plants next to my hedge reflect the beauty of a masterfully painted wall screen

i always admire the peach and plum trees and have worn paths through them
now the yellow gardenias and red pepper fruits are at their peak
the rock ivy tendrils hang with their tips always down
the sky piercing old spruce show a slow death of their crowns

the fragrance of flowers is almost gone now as the fruit ripens
leaf stems want to disconnect from the twigs and cannot sustain new life
in the heat of the autumn sun i thank heaven for its beneficence
because of the coming frost i worry about its effect my garden

i have tried to place benches throughout the many plants
i walk only slowly these days and need a bamboo cane to help me
i cannot now remember where in chang-an the san-chi-sheng yamen sits
i sit in a quiet corner of the chu mountains, listening to sad cries of the apes

murphy taking his joy from the beauty of nature while he can
3/24/2009 8:14 AM

von zach XVII,97

the story of the white duck

have you not seen the yellow wild goose big as a boy
she is now gone, replaced by a duck white as my hair
but her food, the old gleanings of the field, are now blown away
she swims on the high waves at the end of the year in cold weather

she is dreaming of fish and crabs which she can never eat
and she shows her hunger all day flitting back and forth
she is like the mythical giant bird yuan-ju outside the east gate of lu
she remains hungry here fearing the great typhoons further south

murphy idly watching the birds outside his kitchen window
3/24/2009 8:31 AM

von zach XVII,98

winter solstice

year after year i have been a wanderer on the winter solstice
prolonged misery and grief cling stubbornly to me
i am old and alone looking at a bleak river shore
the local people enjoy their seasonal rituals which are strange to me

i lean on my cane after the snow stops looking over red valley
at this time in chang-an the audience is ended in the imperial palace
my heart is torn by this memory of this small bit of my old life
i have lost the path available for my eventual return

murphy remembering the beauty of the ritual fires he laid for the medicine priest
3/24/2009 8:48 AM

von zach XVII,99

younger brother du-guan leaves with his wife from lan-tian to jiang-ling (1 of 3)

i hear that you and your wife have arrived safely in jiang-ling
this news if it is true makes me forget my troubles and sorrows
the wild geese indeed now bring letters to the yang-zi gorges
from these letters i have learned of your successful trip

you quickly passed through the dangerous road of the lan-tian pass
the cold stream now flows quietly through the rock strewn da-yue gorges
i, this old retired official, will soon come by ship to see you in jiang-ling
then in the spring you need to send more messages to me here in kui-zhou

murphy remembering the sibling rivalry of his youth
3/24/2009 10:34 AM

von zach XVII,100

younger brother du-guan leaves with his wife from lan-tian to jiang-ling (2 of 3)

your horse took you over the shen-si mountains just before the deep snows
you must have suffered greatly from the cold on your trek from the north
now you have gotten nearer to me stuck in this foreign land, and i am joyful
but you have now also left our old native country and we share that sad heart

i am ecstatic and don my official regalia to perform a dance of happiness
this white haired old man filled with high spirits sings and plays his zither
under the canopied walk i search for plum buds to share my laughter with them
the thin branches with their shivering flowers can barely hide their titters

murphy prideful and dressed to the nines
3/24/2009 10:44 AM

von zach XVII,101

younger brother du-guan leaves with his wife from lan-tian to jiang-ling (3 of 3)

yu-xin and luo-han had their houses in jiang-ling
who after all these many years occupies them now
if low walls still exist let the weeds cover them
if large spaces surround the houses fill them with blooms

if looking for a house to stay in choose one from the han period
when creating a garden use the shao-ping model for the melon beds
in recent years i have cut back my drinking but now i will have a few
when you invite me to drink i will feel no remorse about it

murphy accepting any excuse for a dram of the creature
3/24/2009 10:55 AM

von zach XVII,102

i take leave of li-yi

the wonderful emperor tang-gao-zu had eighteen sons
seventeen of whom were to become princes of the realm
since your forefather was the eminent prince of dao
and mine prince of shu, we were brothers in the past

although direct male lines and female lines are different
i am also a grandson of the collateral line of your descent
your father assumed the legacy of the prince of dao
and you, like him, bear the gemstone of nobility

because your father li-lian inherited the proficiency of the prince of dao
i wish to speak of him first, for the son is the legacy of the father
your father headed the coterie of imperial male relatives
he brought harmony to the group and carried a most majestic bearing

the late emperor recognized his worth and took his advice
he was revered throughout the world for its correctness
and you, just as cao-zhi, feel kinship with literary men
your knowledge of the classics ranks with that of liu-de prince of he-jian

you show a particular gift for poetry and the official rituals
you carry both within your life with the purity of equanimity
during the gathering of friends in the evening you stand out
your thoughts flow with the surety of the huai river or the huang-he

i remember when i first saw you when you were a child
you wore a short tunic richly embroidered with lilies
now you are a powerful man and i meet you here again
as you seek to comfort me sensing my lengthy period of grief

here in the area of the three yang-zi gorges spring has just arrived
clouds and fogs obscure the mountains on both sides of the river
it would be welcomed by both of us to extend your visit here
but you must leave now and we share no more wine together

you note that i drink my wine slowly now, as an old man does
and marvel at how the tears flow freely down my furrowed cheeks
i ask you again for the destination of your traveling
and you answer only west to the springs of the min river

i caution you to be careful when you visit cheng-du-fu
where many battles are now raging in the countryside
do not accidentally affront any of the generals there
they treat no one with grace as family and punish without mercy

return quickly back to kui-zhou young man before the summer
even now the early plum blossoms have begun to fly away in the winds
be especially careful riding the wind swept waves
and remember to eat heartily to keep up your strength

everywhere along the shore are ferocious wild tigers
angry dragons may rise anywhere from within the floods
you are the descendent of a princely house and must do for yourself
i am only an old man in the midst of the rocks and of no real help

since ancient times friends have always found it difficult to separate
but taking my cue from you i will suppress showing my profound grief

murphy passing the baton at the end of his leg of the relay
3/25/2009 9:11 AM

von zach XVII,103

i escort judge gao of the dao-li-si as he leaves to find feng the governor of lang-zhou

you are like the red bird arriving here with a royal letter in its beak
not knowing yet on which branch he should find his perch
you are like a beautiful runner serving in the court of heaven
who finds himself on the road enduring great hardships

we both know that a judge's post in the da-li-si is certainly no sinecure
and obviously these barren mountains should have no attraction for you
i have to ask you from the beginning why come to these fogs and mists
when you could have remained in the warming sun of the imperial court

we are well acquainted since i am related to you by marriage
and we are also old friends with many shared experiences
why do we now find ourselves both miles from our old homes
thrown together here by happenstance on the shores of the big river

i now suffer constantly from diabetes like si-ma-xiang ru
and i am repeatedly confined to my bed like liu-zheng
your warm conversation has comforted this old man
and i have taken great pleasure in your beautiful poems

it is certainly a pleasure to spend time with such an educated man
especially one with whom innermost feelings can be shared
now i suddenly learn that you are to leave my side
how can i go back to a solitary endurance of this foreign land

these last moments we are spending together are far too short
the time passes as quickly as water in a mountain torrent
bears and wild animals inhabit the woods you will travel
you must be careful on your travels to insure your safety

you now go west to meet your old friend governor feng
and the dangers of the road will accompany your every step
but your future commander feng is a man of exceptional ability
the emperor has always held him in the highest esteem

he was appointed first a sub-general of the imperial bodyguard
and he always advanced the imperial prestige in his service
then he was appointed to the provinces between the huai river and the sea
the old men there remember his administration with reverence

now an enhanced new palace is to be built for the new emperor
there are already many foundation stones and stout beams in place
although earlier i had heard the high firs and cypresses
stood bereft in their lonely reach for the blue heavens

i am so ridden with sickness that i have been unable to write a letter for him
when i have set down characters i notice they are less than adequate
i ask that you convey to him for me my concerns for his well being
i also trust that he will drill his troops to a proper fighting pitch

murphy unable to keep his fingers out of the pie
3/25/2009 12:00 PM

von zach XVII,104

the story of the brocade-red trees

the days have grown seasonally quite short
the green days of the past recede in memory
the end of the year fast approaches
which only adds to the sorrows i feel

the deepening time of frost has withered the trees
their leaves have attained the color of red brocade
the countless rivers continue their race to the east
nothing in the land seems to ever stand still

even the fortress walls of bo-di-cheng
they show age in their graying surface
i live as an old man to the east of the fortress
and must send a letter there requesting more rice

i live behind a brushwood gate i keep closed
my zither, pipa, table and cane my only effects
the lush green grass of summer long gone
only dry blades left to cover the ground

this once splendid runner now hobbled
lumbering around like a water buffalo
since ancient times men have braved their lives
and even proper actions often lead to an unhappy fate

while equally often the intrigues of rogues and scoundrels
often lead to an office as a duke or a count
from my old home i receive only an occasional message
in the past three years there has been only one

the waters of the wei river have not ceased their flow
the land of shen-si is drained, become cold and deserted
the peaceful, influential people in chang-an
brought low by events and made miserable

while the small sons of the villagers in this area
now all wear white furs taken from the winter fox
when a son is born his birth is extremely important
everyone strives to bring him to a life of strength

when he becomes propertied and respected
an entire kingdom can be made to become jealous
his parents are not worried that he is not born with gold
but that in these troubled times he brings his strength

murphy foreseeing the future of his children
3/25/2009 1:54 PM

von zach XVII,105

the tower of the bo-di-cheng fortress

the big river flows under the plank road winding through the mountains
on the wall of the bo-di-cheng fortress the tower rises to a commanding height
the green hillsides around are especially beautiful in the evenings
the narrow valley invites me to take long contemplative walks

shrill cries of the wild geese reverberate through the hills
seagulls float buoyantly not wishing to test the high winds
in yi-chang the colors of spring might have already appeared
i will soon take my small boat to take in that scene

murphy planning small events to break up his tedium
3/25/2009 2:07 PM

von zach XVII,106

i spend the night in the west tower and send these verses to section chief yuan (21st of his clan)
in the morning

the shrill rattle of the night watchman echoes through the night
outside my window i see only a smattering of snow
gradually the sky clears over the tents on the fortress grounds
in the distance the stars of the milky way fade into morning

at dawn the magpies fly up to the gates of the tower
the crows which roost on the masts of the ships take flight
the cold river flows by without any sign of turbulence
it seems to invite me to embark and begin my journey home

murphy roughing it on a visit to the cherokee stomp grounds
3/26/2009 7:57

von zach XVII,107

verse improvised on the west tower and sent to section chief yuan (21st of his clan)

the trees on the mountains disappear into the dense clouds
above it all stretches the unseen cold expanse of blue sky
the snow has covered the rocks masking their natural color
the window curtains in the tower flutter as if wishing to fly

thinking of the problems of the empire brings me to a fresh outpouring of tears
the desired result of quashing the riots depends on the generals
then when i hear you speak about the help you plan to give the dynasty
i am renewed in my hopes for the future and forget my morning sorrows

murphy needing cheering up as much as anyone else
3/26/2009 8:10 AM

von zach XVII,108

i send this verse to my grandnephew du-chong-jian

the high mountains rise to the east and west of the bo-di-cheng fortress
in the south lies the dragon pond, to the north the tiger torrent
grandnephew, you are somewhat remiss in your official duties
you have left your post and moved to zhu-ji-weng to raise chickens

you have taken your family with you and sought solitude
you live in a hidden place like the peach blossom spring of wu-ling
i would like to come live with you in the forest and never leave
i will bring my medications and help provide us both with wine

note the shepherd boys and firewood collectors can be bothersome
please do not hide the path to your mountain retreat from me

murphy fantasizing about living with his extended family once again
3/26/2009 8:31 AM

von zach XVII, 109

i respectfully escort my maternal uncle cui-qing (second of his clan) who returns to his post with
the occupying army of the governor of jiang-ling

your troops carry their red flags and return to the ships in the harbor
you ride beside me on your white war steed through the town of kui-zhou
the trumpets resound and signal the departure of your men
we stop a while along the shore of the big river before you also leave

from that moment staring at the cold morning sky my grief begins
and the intense pain of separation lasts through the entire day til sunset
i am always left behind these days, weak and sickly
when will it finally be again a time of peace and harmony

murphy sadly reading the news of his country's seventh war since his birth
3/26/2009 8:47 AM

von zach XVII,110

the tower on the fortress wall of bo-di-cheng

the fortress rises high to meet the vastness of the sky
the long breastwork walls reach out to touch the heavens
the riverside of the tower receives only a weak reflection of the sun
the walls of the gorge reflect on the mirror surface of the stream

the last month of winter is over and i feel a beginning of warmth
i wish for new lighter clothes and the cost of a journey home
soon we will have the beauty of plum blossoms and greening willows
they will remind me once again of the beauty of my old homeland

murphy a willing participant in his special, time worn rituals
3/26/2009 12:42 PM

von zach XVII,111

a return to my home at night

coming home at midnight i met a tiger but luckily escaped
my family are all asleep in my hut in the dark mountains
i look out to see the big dipper in the direction of the big river
the morning star rises and signals the coming of the dawn

i leave my two lighted torches standing in the front of my hut
i hear frightened monkeys screaming at the entrance to the gorge
this old white haired man dances with joy at escaping the tiger
i pace the floor and cannot sleep, who could be happier than i

murphy quickened in his senses after a cab almost runs him down
3/26/2009 12:51 PM

von zach XVII,112

i hear trumpets in the night

during the night i hear the sound of trumpets from the river
an old man with little to do i listen and my feelings are stirred
the music comes from a neighboring ship and i am saddened
the song is from the borderlands and adds pathos to the night

it is bitterly cold and a heavy snow piles into drifts
through a raging storm music reaches my lonely lamp
does the trumpeter think about the battles he will face
does the music ease the rigors of his harsh travel this night

murphy looking for a favorable move in a losing position
3/26/2009 1:08 PM

von zach XVII,113

two songs to the fierce cold (1 of 2)

one fabled time in the han dynasty snow fell in chang-an six feet deep
cattle and horses huddled together in heaps like hedgehogs
here now next to the stream of chu we have similar weather
tigers and panthers howl in their frustration at not escaping this cold

i am an old man from chang-an, long a wanderer in this wilderness
the local warm climate usually allows me to wear light clothes year-round
whether in the spirit of summer or winter in this setting
i have always kept a white feather fan close by my side

murphy marveling at the power of severe climate change
3/26/2009 1:23 PM

von zach XVII,114

two songs to the fierce cold (2 of 2)

last year the only snow which fell was high up in the mountains
this year the white emperor has taken up residence in the valleys
the dragons have denned up for the duration of the cold
thunder and lightning have become strangers in the land

the cold cuts into the muscles and the bones
the north wind shows it is not always a friend
the people of chu reassure me they never have seen the like
they usually wear only linen all year long

the folk wisdom is that the land never wears a blanket of snow
so why should people have the need for thick covering
now the fire of the sun barely penetrates to the earth
the sun chariot seems reluctant to show its full face

murphy hearing old stories of when the river froze and cars drove over it
3/26/2009 1:35 PM

von zach XVII,115

fair weather in the evening

in the land of the ancient tang-gao terrace in the yang-zi gorges
an enormous amount of snow fell in this last twelfth month
the former evil miasma did not stir up the powdery dust
now the mountain valleys lie under a thick layer of glossy white

the ice causes rocks in the stream to crack, dark amber trees to break
but the gloomy mists of the southern sky have evaporated this evening
now i can glory in the marvelous red rays of the setting sun
even though the solar chariot hurries and the light fades away

for a brief few minutes the sun shines on my dilapidated face
then all too soon it sinks behind the mountains and suddenly disappears
and even though i give voice to exaltation at the serene beauty of the sky
my heart does not lose its grip on its habitual feelings of grief

i do not mean that i envy the youth who are active in the present time
joyously working in the capital to achieve dignity in the emperor's service
but that i am all too aware of the coming end of my life
and i look back with despair at how sad much of it has been

many, too many, of the things i have done were wrong
and now my life is suffocating like the flicker of a dying ember

murphy, like pilgrim, in the slough of despond
3/27/2009 8:28 AM

von zach XVII,116

bad weather again

again the winter returns with its cold severity
the dark, black clouds of the yin principle pile up
though yesterday evening was a beautiful time
today everything is black with high swirling winds

the flags are still raised above the desolate town
but they are in danger of being torn to tatters by this storm
the waves of the river threaten to carry away the sandy shore
snow buries the mountains while the buffalo roar from the cold

can you conjure in your mind the vision of this old man
far from his old home in du-ling, suffering unbearable cold in kui-zhou
the one who is nearly toothless, wholly decrepit
and gone deaf in his left ear, how honorable can he be

murphy counting his many scars of life's battles
3/27/2009 8:45 AM

von zach XVII,117