

on new year's day i show these verses to zong-wu

you show concern that my hand trembles so
i laugh as i say that you are now almost grown
we have celebrated the new year together before
but always farther and farther from our old home

we use the cypress wine for the festivities as usual
but i am sickly and confined to my wooden bench
as a good father i teach you the classics and proper behavior
i only wish i could be a better model with a successful career

i shall however compose a poem for this occasion with my own hand
while you say the ritual words and hand your father the cup
we do not know where my brother lives in the east
so i sing and shed tears as we perform the ceremony

murphy still clinging to the old cherokee ways despite all
4/1/2009 8:44 AM

von zach XVIII,1

a second poem to show my son zong-wu

i see you are composing lines to fit the prosody you just heard
you have covered the bed with books of poems like wang-rong
try to sing the poems in the style of the old masters
and do not be beguiled by prettiness and trickery

on feast days like today drink heartily of the wine
soon you will have attained your full manhood
you have to immerse yourself in the teachings of the classics
having already shown an aptitude for good literature

a boy already fifteen must set his sights appropriately
try first to attain the level of one of the 3,000 pupils of confucius
then work even harder to become one of the best of the best
one of the few who are admitted into the inner hall of the master

murphy envisioning his son outstripping his own achievements
4/1/2009 9:02 AM

von zach XVIII,2

in this foreign country i long to see my younger brothers du-ying, du-guan, and the rest of the family

i know only that du-ying is staying in the town of yang-di
while i recently received a letter from du-guan from jiang-ling
after these many years the rioting still separates us
it is impossible for us to live together in a quiet place

now here in kui-zhou the spring winds have come
the ice and snow have vanished seemingly overnight
though the clouds still form a melancholy sky above
and only the first few flower buds have ventured forth

i sit with my wine at hand and my mind in the clouds
i remember times with my brothers and sing these verses
in past years we celebrated new year's together
and the villagers marveled at our harmonious demeanors

murphy sitting with his brother drinking shiner beer from new braunfels, texas
4/1/2009 9:19 AM

von zach XVIII,3

third day of the first month

i sit on the shore of the chu river growing ever older
here in the mountains of wu i welcome yet another spring
i am eternally the stranger who has many maladies
so many that i am unable to provide for myself

the gate of heaven opens for spring in chang-an
with all the officials appearing in audience before the emperor
such good luck to meet the first rays of the sun and the moon
receiving gold and silver in the palace as traditional gifts

i grieve in these foreign parts estranged from my colleagues
i exist precariously in an area filled with tiger caves
the western upper reaches of the big river flow past kui-zhou
while the big dipper has always hung suspended over chang-an

in this place though i live in leisure i worry too much
i distract myself continuously thinking of politics
i have been here at the end of the world much too long
again watching the plum trees and fields don their raiment of spring

murphy wondering why forsythia predominates in earliest spring
4/3/2009 8:25 AM

von zach XVIII,4

hearing that the rebels and turfan have retreated, i am filled with joy (1 of 5)

the xiao-guan pass and the waters of the lung-zhou are retaken
the dark clouds at the border of kukunor and the huang-he are lifted
under the north star the warrior spirit of chang-an is invigorated
the western barbarians are in retreat like the dogs and sheep they are

murphy as rabid as the next man when defending his clan
4/3/2009 8:39 AM

von zach XVIII,5

hearing that the rebels and turfan have retreated, i am filled with joy (2 of 5)

the tibetan king has sent many envoys to meet in shen-si
stating he wishes to build family relations and to end the turmoil
but the court has quickly decided to send general go-shu-han
to protest the calumny of the chinese princess given in matrimony

murphy setting his quid before his quos
4/3/2009 8:51 AM

von zach XVIII,6

hearing that the rebels and turfan have retreated, i am filled with joy (3 of 5)

from the kong-tong mountains to the far western reaches of the kun-lun
tribute brought on camels and horses has massed at the gates of the palace
yet for the last few years this traffic has been blocked by the fighting
now i hear the turfan have fled as quickly as shooting stars

murphy rejoicing at news from the afghani front
4/3/2009 8:57 AM

von zach XVIII,7

hearing that the rebels and turfan have retreated, i am filled with joy (4 of 5)

nepal is located west of the river filled with precious gems
from the qian-kun kingdom there dark blue tableware has always come
chinese envoys return now with thousands of loads of precious gifts
hopefully all of this tribute will again flow freely to the emperor

murphy desperate to fill his silos for the winter after seasons of crop failure
4/3/2009 9:03 AM

von zach XVIII,8

hearing that the rebels and turfan have retreated, i am filled with joy (5 of 5)

this spring joy returns to all the earth and the sky
all the world worships the omnipotent son of heaven
now in the third year of the da-li period seasons are again in harmony
dai-zong descended from emperor ming-huang now reigns

murphy hoping against hope things will get better
4/3/2009 9:11 AM

von zach XVIII,9

i receive another letter from my brother du-guan who invites me to dang-yang, and i decide to leave kui-zhou about the middle of the second month

since you arrived at dang yang in jiang ling
you have sent me several letters of invitation
as i drank the new year's wine i re-read your letters
i hope to arrive at your home at the time of the han-shi festival

my departure however will depend on other people
i am still sick and walk with a cane so i must use their boat
the time will be when spring will have come back to dong-ting lake
and the gorges surrounding the town of kui-zhou

when i depart i will look forward to finding great happiness in the south
temporarily putting behind me my great longing for returning north to chang-an
like two wild geese in their flight we will meet dangers together
holding reeds in our beaks to prevent any noise to attract hunters

i understand the morals of the people of jiang-ling are lacking
but the vegetation is spectacular especially in the spring
though i have almost grown too old i still hope eventually to return to chang-an
to once again be able to serve my emperor in an official capacity

murphy feeling his oats and in denial of being seventy one
4/3/2009 9:37 AM

von zach XVIII,10

two poems for the festival of the seventh day of the first month (1 of 2)

from the first day of the year until this seventh day
the weather has been unremittingly inclement
because of the ice and snow i've seen no orioles
and the flowers have not yet begun to blossom

the clouds lie low with boiling white foaming mists
the wind roars sadly through the purple mountains
the hair at my temples has become thin and unkempt
it has now become even thinner than white silk threads

murphy fading fast into the gloaming
4/6/2009 8:05 AM

von zach XVIII,11

two poems for the festival of the seventh day of the first month (2 of 2)

the appropriate celebrations bring happiness to the people
this despite the damper of continuing bad weather
they talk together with animation and laugh in their pleasure
they take the bad weather as merely out of the ordinary

the customs of this day do not include dipping cypress branches
the cups of wine are drunk without the ceremony of new year's day
rather today artificial golden flowers which easily resist the cold
are artistically placed in the beautiful headdresses of the women

i wear my sword belt hanging from my waist all the day
even into the night i draw the sword to reach toward the stars
i am moved as once was bo-ya to listen to the flowing water
then to bring out my lute to play, all alone with my thoughts

as last year the early spring invites me to wander
to visit the splendors of the surrounding country
and as i think further in my solitude i determine
to think no more of the difficulties but to begin my trip home

murphy giving it one last heroic try
4/6/2009 8:27 AM

von zach XVIII,12

plum blossoms on the shore of the big river

if the plum buds burst before the la festival
the blossoms are in their glory after new year's
when they partake fully of the fresh vigor of spring
this wanderer becomes sick with his suffering for home

their color at first blends in with the snow on the trees
then fresh winds ripple through them like the waves on the river
that i cannot now be in my old homestead is misery
i sit here in the blooming canyons of the mountains of wu

murphy finding a way to be sad in the midst of beauty
4/6/2009 11:03 AM

von zach XVIII,13

the grass in my courtyard

the grass in the land of chu stays green through the winter
at the beginning of spring my courtyard is covered with a lush carpet
wilted stalks of plants rise again with their new growth
shoots recently covered with snow unfurl and open

when i walk through the courtyard i must be careful
i find this new green at the festivals immensely pleasurable
though when i see the fresh flowers when they appear
i wonder how this white haired old man dare show his wrinkled face

murphy trying to ignore the ravages of age but not succeeding
4/6/2009 3:49 PM

von zach XVIII,14

prior to leaving the canyons of wu i give my small orchard in yang-xi to my southern neighbor

i have always loved moss and bamboo growing around me
yet i am like water chestnuts and thistle down, always on the move
during my extended travels my sons have grown to manhood
how often i have left with them from a hut i had grown to love

the red buds of all my fruit trees are now beginning to show
soon they will display the richness of the most beautiful brocade
i have already arranged for a boat which will take me from the gorges
as i walk around the garden again i remember wielding the hoe

the noisy orioles have yet to appear the first month this year
but i can't wait on them, i am very anxious to be on my way
i pick a few of the new plum blossoms by the snow covered hedge
i watch the wind toss the thin willow limbs near the pavilion

now i am going to give this orchard away to my southern neighbor
even as i take time to sing my farewell to the pleasures of country life
i have grown accustomed to my life here in the yang-zi gorges
where else will i find such good friends as these woodcutters and fishermen

murphy leaping headfirst into the great unknown yet one more time
4/7/2009 8:16 AM

von zach XVIII,15

i escort secretary feng-wu-lang from da-li-fu as he returns to his home in tong-zhou

he, the son of the former governor feng of lang-zhou, had been promised marriage to miss zheng. i had already vouched for him and sent wedding presents for the ceremony, but we received a letter from the girl's uncle that she had already been promised to someone else, so the marriage was called off.

though you are an excellent young man who could marry a princess
you have again lost your bride-to-be and are leaving to visit your mother
the rigors of the long trip to kui-zhou has been taken in vain
the preparations for the festive occasion have all gone for naught

the yo-wa river basin is renowned for the beauty of its horses
the phoenix famously makes its nest in the kun-lun mountains
the two families were well matched and in harmony
one had already called to heaven as witness to the marriage

and rightfully spoke of the equality of the families qin and jin
you would have made a worthwhile son-in-law like wang-xi-zhi or xie-hun
you showed your worth in the spring of youth unfolding your talents
but this shamed white haired old man failed in his position as mediator

now you must stand alone with your honor still a lustrous jewel
while the light of the precious pearl withdraws into the darkness
at the time when spring is still cold but with flowers already open
we part and our deep grief at separation seems to fill the world

murphy bumbling the job in his dotage
4/8/2009

von zach XVIII,16

in the spring of the third year of the da-li period (768) i leave bo-di-cheng by ship and go through the terrifying tang-ju gorge. i have long dwelt in kui-zhou and now move to jiang-ling. on the journey i wrote the following forty rhymes.

i hve spent many years among the people of si-chuan
and now i finally leave the broderlands of chu
i go aboard the ship but i am not entirely happy
as the dew evaporates i am alone and deeply sigh

we pass through the narrow gorges and hear the loud cries of the apes
we pass through the wider areas and disturb the wild ducks swimming
the blue green of the moss on the shore bathes the boat where i sit
the cool moist mountain air refreshes my flesh and blood

the towering peaks around us resemble thrusts of shining swords
mountain torrents burst into the river splashing iridescent water pearls
the thick hanging ivy softens the rocky canyon walls
the trees whether luxuriant or withered add their deep full colors

as we pass the peak of the wu-shan fairy it displays a shining beauty
though we doubt the continued existence of the house of wang-zhou-jun
we still have the songs and feel the old wounds of the heart
though the dreams of the wu-fan fairy are ended and the feelings have vanished

we now pass through eddies with the waves in constant boiling motion
the boat rocks back and forth as it navigates the chaotic currents
the thundering floods penetrate deep within the interior of the earth
the foam sparkles in the air as does snow and ice in the sun

as we come to the deer antler sand banks we enter treacherous waters
at the wolf head shoal we are temporarily stymied and can barely pass
did my face change its color as we passed this dangerous shoal
i feigned indifference and left my life in the hands of higher powers

my books have all been thrown into confusion by the turmoil
my luggage partially crushed, some water soaked into my possessions
my life was in immediate danger, my fate in the balance
but luckily we escaped death, though only by a hair's breadth

since the riverbed behind the gorges is not easily seen and appreciated
most don't understand that all the rivers in the outlying watersheds form the big river
that all heaven and earth combine to form the dark masses of the waters
while a recurrent rain washes and nurtures the spring vegetation

white gulls flit by criss-crossing like weaving silk threads
black dragons churn the waters as if brocades were being washed

the mists surrounding the setting sun remind of rippling green silks
the setting of the waning moon remind of the damages suffered in the west

bamboo shoots peek from around the sludge supporting the mature stalks
whose flowers tower above the nascent shoots seeking the light from far below
young wild geese compete with each other to find small animals to catch
swallows attack the many crows settled on the masts of the ship

isolated high cliffs are shrouded by the thick low lying mists
on the round islands in the river the sun shines only early and late
almost as soon as i was told to look for tao-mu outcropping
i perceived that we were already approaching yi-dun-xian

yi-chang is beautifully situated in the district of jiang-ling
as we approach the water pavilion at the ford i remember chang-an
my grieving heart then delights in the beautiful silence
suddenly feeling happiness i burst into boisterous song

contentment is evident in my inner joy and cheerful laughter
in my old age i vacillate between wisdom and foolishness
with my white hair i wander around erratically
and leave my ultimate fate to the decisions of heaven

i am perplexed as i return to the world from my long exile
i wonder if i have been self deceived about the worth of my poetry
in this life i did serve in the government of an illustrious ruler
and should not therefore complain about my failed career

i was held back in the land of strangers by lengthy illness
as a young man the emperor gave me entree into the ranks of scholars
because of my ideals i was moved to offer unneeded advice to the divine ruler
then asked the emperor to return me to the life of field and streams

the dangers of the yan-yu-dui rock in the gorges frightened me
now i hope to reach the deep quietude of the cang-lang river
though i long ago gave up my official position as censor
i still must concern myself with meeting my daily needs

i will be happy to live in the area of the tian-huang monastery in jiang-ling
where i will look into writings of wang-xi-zhi and the art of zhang-seng-you
i also expect to visit the island of the daughters of the emperor yao
and to visit the tomb of emperor shun-cang-wu to grieve his death

court officials all wear military uniforms as a result of the rioting
the emperor must continue to polish his mighty sword
first the shooting star of the barbarians insulted the heavens

then chang-an fell into the soiled hands of the enemy

though the officers of the military are held in high regard
their ethics are far different from those of the scholars
to take oneself away from the unrest is to become a crane in the wilderness
an elegant runner should never be harnessed to the front of a wagon

it is unlikely that the gods will send another yi-yin or lu-wang
even a han-xin or a peng-yue are difficult to come by
i see the imperial court as high and unapproachable
and i am now proceeding south without ties to the government

i look back with pity on the suffering of the people of si-chuan
where the rebellious generals will eventually be defeated
i am looking now to mountain forests where my body can rest
but i fear that i will not escape completely from the troubles

murphy on his last great trek into the unknown
4/10/2009 8:05 AM

von zach XVIII,17

my young friend, the former governor tang from fen-zhou, gives me a farewell dinner. he invites various officials and provides wine and music. i quickly compose this little poem and write it on the wall of the house.

illness has long confined me to bed in the eastern district of si-chuan
this year i have forced myself to act and now return to my home
sadly my friend tang is to be exiled from here to distant shi-zhou
this occasion of my departure today adds even further melancholy

i have accepted this kind invitation but i must rest on the floor for a while
listening to the sad songs of separations moves me to copious tears
all the other officials gathered here still keep me in their ranks
their combined brilliance embellishes their kindness at my departure

murphy still commanding respect in his dotage
4/10/2009 8:33 AM

von zach XVIII,18

on a spring night i give a feast for censor tian and shi-zhang of xiao-zhou. i am given yen as a rhyme word to make a poem.

looking at the big dipper we sense this feast takes place after midnight
censor tian, it is my honor, i am from si-chuan and we meet on our journey
i support myself with my cane walking up to the pavilion on the shore
i take a brush to write these verses as we share a pleasant spring sky

i am only an old man and drink enough to assuage my sorrows
and i must leave these festivities early when the morning star appears
in the morning light i see we have left the cloudy rain-rich canyons
we have reached xia-lao at the eastern end of the gorges

murphy taking his pleasures where he finds them
4/13/2009 8:15 AM

von zach XVIII,19

respectfully i send these verses to my younger kinsman, imperial commissioner tang

we are both descendants of emperor yao of tang
in this prosperous clan many people share our names
worthy men within us have earned their place in history
many of us have spread far and wide throughout the land

today the clan is especially scattered and many of them are cunning
i feel i must watch my words when i speak with them
but you stand in isolation with your sense of duty
vowing to help the suffering people through your good efforts

a white object is often afraid to become staained with dirt
but a man with character cannot truly become tarnished
astonishingly you were judged guilty of misconduct
it was at the end of the yong-tai period and you were exiled to ho-nan

alas even the phoenix one time had its wing broken
and confucius once mourned his wounding of the unicorn
lightening attacks the crown of the might spruce
but its root system can overcome the disaster to bring new growth

your single misfortune must not drive you into mourning
i believe in your integrity and trust in your self-confidence
your boat has reached wu-shan-xian and the chu-gong palace
you are landing with the utmost sadness thinking of the emperor

now you have been officially exiled to stay in qing-jiang
a place which is not far from the gorges of wu and kui-zhou
you have to leave your ship and proceed to shi-zhou
previously in a letter you expressed your feelings to me

because of my lung illness i cannot return to the court
i would like nothing better than speaking with you about old times
though the strong spring winds are powerful indeed
it will take at least ten days to arrive where you now are

but i am not afraid to drive through the middle of the currents
i will defy the wrath of the crocodiles and the otters
my trustworthy crew have already set the rudder toward you
i strongly wish to be with such a loyal official to offer my condolences

murphy championing his unjustly calumnified friends
4/13/2009 9:52 AM

von zach XVIII,20

my boat lands at the pavilion on the stream near jiang-ling

i have worn my black gauze cap in my boat followed by the gulls
my small ship is now moored at a pavilion on the stream
the waters here are deep but very transparent indeed
the green of the bamboo and spruce are seen at a distance

the balcony of a single pillar in jiang-ling is not far
i will never again return to the tang-gao balcony in the wu mountains
i have left behind my last nights in the prefecture of kui-zhou
i look forward to spending my remaining days here in the open lands

murphy reaching a new home after a tiring trek
4/13/2009 10:06 AM

von zach XVIII,21

i reach gu-cheng-dian on my trip and, despite my parochial thoughts, give these verses to the officials of the general command of jiang-ling

despite my advanced age i am always traveling
now the longer days of spring brighten the mountains
white reed covered huts stand in fields of flowers
the lonely fort of gu-cheng-dian borders fields of wheat

the river broadens here much more than at kui-zhou
we are going downstream so our boat does not need towing
butterflies ceaselessly flutter about in the wind
fearless spring gulls slowly dodge our vessel

the family of the governor wei-bo-yue reflects virtue
the general command of jiang-ling is rich with gifted men
despite the fatigue of the journey and my illnesses
i am overwhelmed by the warmth of your welcome

murphy luxuriating in the first warm sunny day of spring
4/20/2009

von zach XVIII,22

during a rain i enter the house of my brother du-wei who serves in the army

the noise of the morning trumpets penetrates the sky
the beautiful city wall i go along seems longer in this rain
drenched flowers on the outskirts of the city sag powerless
the swallows eagerly seek the mud for the nests they build

my brother fills his position in the army with great strength
i, an ordinary man, tarnish the rank of ministerial secretary
i drift along, an aimless water chestnut suppressing his tears
with deeply lined face and tangled hair i enter my brother's home

murphy having given up vanity as a hapless endeavor
4/20/2009 8:17 AM

von zach XVIII,23

on the third day of the third month at a feast in the park of archivist xu

the hair on my temples is white and straggles down my neck
the chalices are filled with red flowers dangling in profusion
drinking enough to stagger no longer fits a man of my age
but nevertheless i join the other invitees at the festival

we are all in light clothes on the shore of a beautiful pond
the invigorating spring breezes fan our eager faces
i feel pleasure as i remain here steadfast like a cassia branch
with no disturbing thoughts of my life as a tumbling thistledown

murphy stretching out his pleasurable moments
4/20/2009 8:34 AM

von zach XVIII,24

at a banquet in the library of censor hu

on the rivers and lakes near jiang-ling spring is coming to an end
in the walled courtyard of censor hu one can still see a bit of sun
here in the evening twilight everyone is surrounded by books
seed crowns of the flowers have burst and light seeds fly around

the fame of the members of the han-lin society has always grown
my joy in their continuing poetic efforts has become limitless
tonight these stars of literature will come out and sparkle
we now become drunk and will not leave as long as poems come forth

murphy rapturous with his muse stricken buddies
4/21/2009 8:18 AM

von zach XVIII,25

after the banquet in the library i asked ministerial director li-zhi-fang to dismount at my house
while i sang these lines in the moonlight

purity emanates from the cool breeze
crystal moonlight ripples on the pond
let us not end the banquet, dismount
here we can finish my pots of wine

don't be put off by my temple hair
now much like the down of the white crane
let us enjoy drink until the fifth night vigil
by then the neighbor's cock will crow

murphy recapturing the thrill of his early escapades
4/21/2009 8:35 AM

von zach XVIII,26

meeting li-gui-nian south of the big river

we met often in the palace of the prince of qi, li-zhen
and i heard you sing many times in the hall of the eunuch cui-tao
now, much later, in the beautiful countryside south of the big river
we meet again at the propitious time of the falling blossoms

murphy turning a witty phrase at a cocktail party in the plaza hotel
4/21/2009 3:42 PM

von zach XVIII,27

traveling south to dong-ting-hu

the swollen waters of spring carry me along the shore
my boat floats like the clouds over these maple forests
in managing my life i have been constantly on the move
the further i go the more tears moisten my robes

i am old and sick as i steadily move further south
and my heart yearns for the grace of the northern court
it seems my whole life i have written poems of bitter regret
and have yet to find anyone who truly admires such a sad music

murphy leaving his work for appreciation in the future
4/21/2009 4:02 PM

von zach XVIII,28

a remote area of the earth

between the big river and the han loom impassable mountains
i have only recently come to this remote area of wind and clouds
and every year i find myself in a new unfamiliar setting
wherever i find myself i am always in misery

because of the riots i wander as did wang-can the nobleman of qin-chuan
and i am grief stricken as was qu-yuan, statesman of the chu frontier
my heart was already broken in the peacetime of my youthful wanderings
and now in these times of trouble my pathway becomes even more desolate

murphy beating his chest in anguish
4/22/2009 8:14 AM

von zach XVIII,29

the dream of returning home

at times the way home seems open and at times closed
here on the banks of the big river i grow more lonely and desperate
i am only an old man who wishes to live a normal life
yet now three emperors have seen these riots continue

at night a heavy rain falls on these maple forests of chu
in the distance far to the north black clouds are clustered
my soul caught here in the cloudy darkness cannot return
how it yearns unrequited for home like in the songs of chu

murphy marooned at an oasis in the middle of a vast wasteland
4/22/2009 8:27 AM

von zach XVIII,30

respectfully i escort my old friend li, 25th of his clan, as he leaves to take up his post

your father was executed when a minister, as was zhang-hua
the world has always pitied him for the injustice of this act
the dignity of the ancestors is finally achieved by their descendents
as the knowledge of the classics is bequeathed from father to son

as a young man, by virtue of your ancestor's dignity, you have risen to the stars
it is already possible for you to become the head of your family
your plumage is that of the fabled phoenix as was that of your father's
your sword is no ordinary weapon and reminds of the famous blade long-quan

by the end of spring your boat shall be at the red wall of soo-chow
your destination there is the gu-su balcony overlooking the sea
so far away from home my hair has turned competely white
and even the joy of this farewell banquet does not assuage my grief

murphy desperately holding on to his depression
4/22/2009 8:52 AM

von zach XVIII,31

at the end of spring in jiang-ling i respectfully escort the high official ma (head of his clan) as he hastens to answer the merciful command of the emperor to return to chang-an

since ancient times reverent sons were searched for by imperial officials
they were found most often from within the ranks of famous families
our worthy local official ma has great talent and is superbly schooled
the imperial method still selects excellence and will continue to do so

you are like the eye-attracting shining jewel in the midst of a treasure
you are like a great racer who without hesitation begins his charge
with your eloquent speech you convince the citizens of their duties
you have become justly famed and are roundly praised by all around

your literary output is compared to that of pan-yo and lu-ji
you possess strategic talents equal to sun-wu and wu-ji
the court has called you to the capital to serve the emperor
you leave the southern areas to become a national treasure

now you will rise like the moon to fill a high post in finery
you proceed this spring to the steps of jade below the throne
when you arrive there a warm southeast wind will blow through the bamboo
while the odes of the shi-jing will be sung at the imperial banquet of welcome

the intentions of heaven are far beyond our abilities of discernment
and at my age i must stand by here while noble ma leaves for chang-an
we look out on the swollen big river as we separate our futures
i can only hope that we have a joyful reunion in the afterlife

murphy realizing finally that he is doing some things for the last time
4/23/2009 8:58 AM

von zach XVIII,32

in late spring i accompany president li-zhi-fang and vice-president li on their trip to the lake pavilion of inspector zheng-zhen near jiang-ling. while in the boats poems are written and i get the rhyme guo.

we here on this lake have received much great inspiration
we are led by two masters of literature within the four seas
the wine served in cups of jade has brought a joyful mood
drunken songs are sung in the evening as we row on the lake

in this glorious spring birds flit and fish leap
chestnuts and lotus flowers adorn the lapping waves
the villa of inspector zheng delights his guests
despite my senile decay i traveled far to be here

murphy never one to turn down a party
4/23/2009 9:12 AM

von zach XVIII,33

the story of silkworms and cows

in the vast and disparate parts of the empire
there are easily ten thousand large cities
and within this large number not one
not a single one is free from arms and conflict

how good it would be if all the metals were melted
and farming equipment be formed for the people
then there would not be the smallest parcel of land
which would escape the ravages of the plow

and if all the cattle were to be used to clear the forests
the vast cultivation of silkworms could occur
then patriotic men would no longer be needed for heroic acts
and the indignity of riots would not bring men to tears

men could look to farming, women to the care of silkworms
society would be in harmony and work songs would unite the land

murphy rarely utopian in his outlook, but maybe this once he will be
4/23/2009 9:27 AM

von zach XVIII,34

three abbreviated stanzas (1 of 3)

two years ago the governor of yu-zhou was killed
this year the governor of kui-zhou was murdered
the rebels everywhere are worse than tigers and wolves
they eat men, why would they deign to spare women and children

murphy madly railing at savagery
4/23/2009 9:33 AM

von zach XVIII,35

three abbreviated stanzas (2 of 3)

twenty one families fled together to si-chuan
when they left the lo valley only a single man survived
he told of how his two daughters were wrested from his hands
he looked back with longing toward chang-an and wept pitiously

murphy reporting the facts, only the facts
4/23/2009 9:38 AM

von zach XVIII,36

three abbreviated stanzas (3 of 3)

although the imperial guard is very brave
they are also savage like the turfan and tatars
though i have heard that in the fighting on the han river
many women were among the imperial troops

murphy calling all hands to the fray
4/23/2009 9:43 AM

von zach XVIII,37

sharing a feast in the library of sub-prefect sung (oldest of his clan) with his sub-officers and my brother du-wei. i seal the following verse using the same rhyme as all the others.

you are all like the blood sweating horses from near the wo-wa river
you are like fabled unicorns descended from the heavens
an excellent talented man has gathered here his estimable friends
and i have heard the poems you all have posted in the library

here after the rain we share the beauty of cherry blossoms at their peak
your resplendent uniforms harmonize with their colors of brotherly love
we celebrate this festival day clinking our cups of wine with joy
i have now met your poetry for the first of hopefully many times

murphy the perfect after dinner speaker
4/24/2009 9:01 AM

von zach XVIII,38

together with yu-wen-chao the nephew of ministerial director li and cui-yu the uncle of the sacrifice officer and son of secretary cui, i go again to the front part of the lake of inspector zheng

the pavilion lies a good distance from all others
one of its special charms is its seclusion
now the waters of the lake have risen in the spring
and the two parts are joined into one large body

the festivities go on for quite a long time
though exceedingly drunk we venture onto the waters
and even with our caps awry on our tipsy heads
we still do not begin to return to the shore

our cups are thin compared to the clouds of silken gauze
softly hovering above us as they begin to unravel
the oars disturb the beautiful lotus flowers
causing them to be refeshed with the roiling water

we eventually return drunkenly to the pavilion
as once did shan-jian from the lake of the xi family
and you shall see us return here again and again
to so enjoy ourselves in such a perfect setting

murphy still the life of the party when he gets going
4/27/2009 8:19 AM

von zach XVIII,39

a song of grief at separation. i escort the high dignitary xiang as he returns to chang-an to
present the imperial robes for the dragon boat festival on behalf of governor wei-bo-yu

once while emperor su-zong remained secluded in ling-wu
his brave generals were ordered to recapture the capital chang-an
at that time the two xiang brothers wept bitter tears in ling-wu
they worked with the court officials until the world was pacified

the rebellious an-lu-shan vanished like smoke and ash
the rewards for you and your brother astounded the world
your portraits were hung in the unicorn gallery
one next to the other they took places of prominence

you both entered the emperor's palace with honor
from then on you have worn the golden seal on your sash
especially the commendable efforts of the governor wei-bo-yu
they rise above the vaunted successes of remote antiquity

bravely wei-bo-yu serves as governor of the jiang-ling region
as a later successor to my revered ancestor du-yu
he has had made garments for the emperor of cloud-soft silk
he kneels to offer them as a gift for the dragon boat party

he sends hsiang as his loyal heart to visit the court
the sun now sinks behind the green mountains and the river
at court i hope you mention this white haired old man
who in his sorrowful wanderings is now a mere hermit living by blue waters

murphy still imagining his continued worth
4/27/2009 9:36 AM

von zach XVIII,40

on a summer day in the house of district judge yang of chang-ming, i say farewell to censor cui
and director chang of the cabinet office, both leaving for chang-an. i am given the rhyme shen.

i have become drunk from the wine in the house of a second yang-xiong
after climbing to the hall i heard another fu-bo-qi playing a flute
it is not enough to have to put up with my senile decay
but now i must bid a sad farewell to my friends who are leaving

the western reaches of the big river is very far from the capital chang-an
the big dipper which stands over it can barely be seen on the horizon
but the house of censors and the cabinet office are close to each other there
while i will be left behind on long summer days to write lonely poems

murphy watching the familiar skin of the world peel from his being
4/28/2009 8:25 AM

von zach XVIII,41

a chain of poems written on a summer night at minister li-zhi-fang's banquet (with cui-yu) in honor of yu-wen-chao as he leaves for his post in shi-shou

du fu:

a beloved guest of li-zhi-fang is generously feasted
on this occasion he is leaving our midst to take up his official post

li-zhi-fang:

let us fill our cups again to imbibe the fragrant wine freely
the shadow of a departing ship waits patiently at the riverside

cui-yu:

let us feast on pheasant, a good omen for xiao-wang-zhi
and duck which presaged the good fortune of wang-jiao

du fu:

the light rain is ending and the clouds are breaking up
the candles burn brightly but the wicks droop as the night lengthens

li-zhi-fang:

our hats slip sideways also as we sway in our drunken chat
let us use some fine paper to record this festive occasion

cui-yu:

we wish you every joy and a safe trip to your post
and though a bit tipsy we shall not sleep but party on

du fu:

remember how fu-bu-qi wisely used his abundance of leisure time
and like pan-yo you will be successful in writing while still a young man

li-zhi-fang

how strange it is to meet the son of my sister here in the hinterlands
and how sad it is to have to say good-bye to him once again

murphy holding up his end of the drunken conversation

4/28/2009 9:04 AM

von zach XVIII,42

very ill in the hot season i send these verses to ministerial director li-zhi-fang

in my declining years i suffer greatly from my recurrent illnesses
why has it been so oppressively hot since the beginning of summer
the wide waters are colored red from the sun and look like a fiery sea
miraculous rocks seem to emerge from the depths but are merely steaming clouds

i feel like a victim of sun stroke and wish to be under a light refreshing rain
how can i hope ever again to be given ice in court as an imperial favor
rest assured that i have not ignored your kind invitation
but because of the current heat i cannot embark on such a visit

murphy feverishly in polite denial
4/28/2009 9:17 AM

von zach XVIII,43

i spend the night on the boat and express my feelings to my friends in jiang-ing

my sickness has returned to add its insult to my foolishness and indolence
so i am unfortunately armed with two excuses for my social awkwardness
i am old and my hair is now so sparse it will not comb properly
and i have become so deaf that one must write words for me to understand

we are in an area rich with water yet we have great need for rains
the extended hot weather has caused many pools to become only shallow mud
while there are still waves upon the small tributary river there are not enough
i continue to be able to tie my boat to the dam but cannot leave

when i embark i hope to be able to go north to my old home land
but if that is impossible i will return to the west and kui-zhou
as i have grown old i have come to hate all this traveling around
and tonight i am reduced to tears thinking of my troubled life

the younger members of my family remain back in dang-yang
they write sad letters that they only have tasteless rice gruel to eat
how did i ever come to be penned up here old and helpless
it is really difficult to deal with personal matters in this war torn world

i lie here on my couch gazing out on the stars and moon reflected on the waters
incessant drums reach me from the guarded fortress walls of jiang-ling
the high winds roar with the guttural tones of tigers and panthers
i share the night on the water with the ducks and the gulls

i am fearful of embarking on another fruitless trip yet again
and i regret having to leave my good friends here in jiang-ling
i am incessantly bouncing back and forth on my boat
and have spent too many sleepless nights aboard listening to night sounds

gentlemen, your prominence towers like bronze sacrificial vessels
you shelter others beneath your shade like venerable peach and plum trees
to quench my dire thirst i had hoped for a few drops from your overflow
but my daily expenses are quickly exhausting my meager resources

if i walk with my cane to your homes the porter will not let me enter
and the cost is prohibitive for me to hire a sedan chair for the trip
in my desperation i would be willing to take even the most menial of tasks
yet no one offers me such and i sit alone on my boat

is it not possible for the high army officials to find a small place for me
to rise to the level of the floating clouds requires some sort of ladder
i wish only to earn my own way and find it awkward to say as such
you all must be aware that this has always been my position

you of course do not need to empty the granaries to ease my problems
though i would not wish to recross a bridge in other than proper regalia
my heart is loyal despite my age and will remain so whatever happens
if any of my friends wish to seek me out i am in seclusion here on my boat

murphy not too proud for straightforward begging
4/29/2009 2:35 PM

von zach XVIII,44

in jiang-ling we await the arrival of the emperor

the great city of jiang-ling has always been beautiful and powerful
its prestige will now grow much larger with the visit of the emperor
it is situated to advantage to the west of si-chuan province
and her stars lie in conjunction to the north in shen-si

birds of zhe-giang find safe harbor in her mists
her ships and boats dominate giang-su
although zhou-mu-wang never came to visit
we hope now finally to welcome tang-dai-zong

arms and weapons have been sent to jiang-ling as precautions
the capital of chang-an has been placed in the hands of reliable officials
soon the imperial cortege will leave the cloud balcony there
and the imperial mercy shall breathe fresh life into our city

murphy imagining himself the anchor of the evening news
4/30/2009 8:23 AM

von zach XVIII,45

the lady guo-guo

the lady guo-guo, yang-gui-fei's sister, enjoys imperial favor
she rides out through the palace gate in the early mornings
but she spurns the tradition of make-up, powder and rouge
being content with only a penciled eyebrow she kneels before her master

murphy always with an eye for the ladies
4/30/2009 8:29 AM

von zach XVIII,46

i express my displeasure

the land stretches wide next to the flat, sandy shore
here my desolate ship lies, a small cave for me to live in
on the main road i see the dust of the incoming imperial commissioner
the town walls block the sun from my masts where the crows now settle

because of the rains the heat of the day brings hot fogs
only as now in the evening do cooling breezes bring relief
the stars peek out from between floating clouds, then vanish
the moon glitters intermittently on the churning waves

the light of fireflies can be seen through the boat curtains
as i look out long threads of cobwebs cling to my white hair
as i listen to melancholy strings i sit stooped at the table
only when sounds of the flute are heard do i burst into tears

i have lived for a long time as the poor husband of qin working for in-laws
when i meet people i run away like the madman of the chu empire
if i gaze on my sword in its scabbard i am moved to desire action
i touch the bag with the awl and its point reassures me i am still skilled

the lands to the east of the passes are stained by the rebel's presence
battles with the turfan have exhausted the area west of the lung mountains
in quiet times men have little use of strategy and tactics
in times of upheaval the wisdom of scholars is eschewed

with my declining strength i will muster the will to act as confucius
i will ride on a raft out to sea and question the sky in my pain
my entire life i have been able to accept what fate has bestowed on me
it is only the thought of my homeland that i can never forget

murphy stubborn in defending his core beliefs
4/30/2009 9:02 AM

von zach XVIII,47

as the new palace of wei-bo-yu, governor of jiang-ling, prince of yang-cheng-qun, is finished, he asks censor and judge yen to compose a seven footed poem. at the same time i write the following verse.

your palace is so high that ice and snow form there in the hot season
high flying swallows and sparrows are delighted with their new home
before the green lacquered windows lie tangled fogs of morning
while fine fleecy clouds float easily over the red cornices

your treatment of military and civilian affairs is greatly admired
you make many friends with your entertainments and love of literature
you often invite your officers like censor yen to offer their efforts
you will be remembered with affection by all future generations in this land

murphy polishing his apple to give to the teacher
5/1/2009 8:36 AM

von zach XVIII,48

i seal the following verse and send it to the prince of wei

the completed palace soars mightily upwards in the northwest of jiang-ling
from its height one looks out on the surrounding mountains, lakes, and rivers
the pure sky above and the coarse earth below clearly separate
one asks at this height whether hot vapors truly exist in the hot season

it has already been many years that you have brought peace to these environs
from morning til evening you are surrounded by scholars in long robes
this white haired old man was graciously given paper to write a poem for you
but i must stand ashamed before your honor and report i can offer no such verse

murphy strangely articulate in his oratory
5/1/2009 8:52 AM

von zach XVIII,49

the stars and moon over the stream at jiang-ling, two poems (1 of 2)

the earlier sudden rain has cooled this autumn night
now the moonlight pours out from amongst the stars
the light from the milky way is unusually bright
and the waters by the shore are quiet and clear

the bead chain of luminous stars is torn in succession
as the moon rises through the celestial vault
gradually this stately dance fades as the morning comes
now one can discern the glowing drops of dew on the leaves

murphy watching nature with wide eyed wonder
5/1/2009 9:07 AM

von zach XVIII,49

the stars and moon over the stream at jiang-ling, two poems (2 of 2)

the moon sinks as the wind blows through the ropes
as the stars go out a dense morning fog envelops the boat
a rooster crows at the reappearance of the light
a heron is bathed in lambence standing in the shallows

where has the field of stars disappeared to, do they still move
into what distant place has the round moon sunk
the deep sufferings of this wanderer are still not over
they will be back in force when the night returns

murphy reading with awe of the self-flagellation of the shias
5/1/2009 9:19 AM

von zach XVIII,51

from the boat in the moonlight i look out on the monastery near the postal station

although it is deep in the night i need no candle
the brightness of tonight's moon enlightens the boat
beyond the green of the maple trees lies the monastery
the red postal station lies on the moon brilliant shore

the cawing of ravens in the remote little town is barely heard
in the undergrowth along the shore i see sleeping herons
only this lonely white haired pacer is awake on this river
as i pull back the curtains to gaze on a landscape bathed in silver

murphy the aged insomniac
5/4/2009 8:21 AM

von zach XVIII,52

on the boat

when i can i eat outdoors on the boat among the riverbank willows
when it rains i sleep inside while safely tied up at the postal station
i can throw a net out from a connected boat to catch fish for my meals
as many ships lie together mast to mast next to my craft

fine thin clouds grace the sky this morning
last night the moon was full and bright
i move from place to place here in the southern border states
sometimes i think i might finally become an aged water spirit

murphy whiling away endless idle hours
5/4/2009 8:36 AM

von zach XVIII,53

on an autumn day in jiang-ling i express my feelings

once i was so happy to be recommended to the emperor by fang-guan
now i am shamed to have turned out to have no lasting talent
i was already old and became a tarnished failure as a court official
in my feeble attempts to help the others in the performance of their duties

on horseback i followed the emperor's party as su-zong fled north
i thank fang guan for his help but i left in exile from the office of censor
although my great crime was graciously pardoned and i lived
i was thrown out into a land full of riots where travel was difficult

each year the swallows came and went with the seasons
my life passed quickly as sunlight through a small crack
for many years i was consumed by debilitating sickness
heedless of destination i traveled here then there by small boat

nine years i spent in cheng-du-fu lighting the annual fire
then three years passed in kui-zhou near the temples of chu
it might be true that emperor wang changed into a cuckoo to vanish
duke zhao of zhou also went to the south and never returned

that was when the insurgent generals were arbitrary ruling dragons
the wolves and tigers of the western barbarians ravaged the land
i had to give up my literary endeavors i had prepared myself for
it happened so suddenly i was left with none of my hoped for fame

my songs now are always like the sad caws of the nocturnal ravens
my mind is exhausted as cranes after their dancing for the court
the autumn waters overflow the bamboo on the xiang river
a hostile wind ruffles the trees on mei-ling mountain here in jiang-ling

i have long been a hungry tiger in a cage fighting its tail as it begs for food
i am a fish whose career is over, unable to leap over the dragon jump gate
i am careful to hold my tongue so people will not have cause to slander me
though i have sincere negative concerns about the political situation

in desperation i complain loudly like ruan-ji at the end of his road
i cry continuously like wang-can while he was fleeing for his life
in my hunger i depend on the rice given to me by patrons
in my grief everywhere i go these days i ask for a mug of wine

i do not wish to write poems of the poor scholar like dao-yuan-ming
i therefore resign myself to being mocked by my beneficent hosts
the luck or misfortune of the empire is difficult to predict
while it is rather easy to guess which individuals will succeed or fail

the new officials of emperor su-zong are of unequal merit
many are unjustified to wear the uniform and most are low born
they rose in the ranks without the qualifications of a yi-yin or zhou-gung
acting as if they possessed the talents of a qu-yuan or song-yu

because the court itself is related by marriage to the turfan princes
fang-guan was deposed from his position as imperial minister
this idea of relation by marriage was unusual in earlier dynasties
and the patriotism of fang-guan was questioned due to his opposition

although his different successors took great pains in what they tried
the imperial troubles deepened and no solutions were found
and although these officials were well paid and had great authority
none of them were able to be compared favorable with fang-guan

i had hoped there would be plans to lessen the number of weapons
and that the pillars of the state would no longer be mortally threatened
then members of the imperial family could govern among the provinces
and the tendency of appointing ever more generals for war would wane

the emperor must use his majestic prestige to allow for this easing of tensions
as once cheng-tang mercifully opened nets to allow the possibility for game to escape
then once more the red birds would come forth from the east
and one would not have to search far to find marvelous horses

i do not have the natural abilities of fu-yue living in the wilderness dreamed of by a king
rather i am like yan-he who fled from his royal appointment through a hole in the wall
since the oldest times the heart of the hermit on the big river or on the lakes
has been likened to the stillness of mine today, as motionless as dead ashes

murphy wondering who would be interested in the summation of the lessons of his life
5/7/2009 8:24 AM

von zach XVIII,54

jiang-ling, the land between the yang-zi and han rivers

i am a stranger wandering here between the yang-zi and han rivers
a useless writer yearning to return home but abandoned in the world
i am lonely as a single cloud floating over the desert sands
lonely as a forlorn moon moving through an interminable night

although i have grown old my heart is still filled with force
i am stripped bare like a tree in autumn but my illness is better
since ancient times men have had sympathy for old horses
they fed and kept them for tasks other than the long runs

murphy counting the ways he still matters
5/7/2009 9:29 AM

von zach XVIII,55

on wandering further

above the stream floats a mirage of tall buildings
steep mountains rise above the drifting clouds
dust storms plague the land of si-chuan
rain squalls darken the kingdom of chu

i fled before the riots, leaving like the cunning wild goose
but now am as sad as a monkey whose trees have been taken away
i am like su-qin traveling from state to state in torn furs
who was never able to return to his cherished homeland

murphy making quasi-peace with his exile
5/7/2009 9:56 AM

von zach XVIII,56

the story of the crumbling balustrade

xuan-fang-ling and wei-zheng are sadly no longer with us
these scholars appointed by emperor tai-zong will be difficult to replace
students of the imperial college are cast down into the mud
in contrast general yue-chao-en rides a splendid white horse

for a thousand years dutifully faithful advisers such as ju-yuen have been few
to this day the crumbling balustrade to which he clung still juts upward
although lou-shi-de remains silent, song-jing utters admonishing words
and i remember that the emperor ming-huang purged outspoken advisers

murphy counting votes before the senatorial showdown
5/8/2009 8:02 AM

von zach XVIII,57

on an autumn day in jiang-ling i bid farewell to xie, district judge of shi-zhou. i give to him (as well as to his older brother, the minister xie-jing-xian) this informal poem of thirty rhymes. i praise his abilities and speak of my feelings.

i have been drawn to the south and lived here for a long time meeting you often
now here on this pavilion in autumn for the first time i take leave of you
your term of office is over and you return to court like the immortal qiao-wang
you have recently received a letter from your older brother xie-jing-xian

here in jiang-ling you leave a legacy of a wonderfully efficient management
and now you leave to be with your beloved older brother in your old home left long ago
i have heard envoys of tibet are to visit accompanied by xie-jing-xian
he is now famous for his successful mission to tibet and has received more responsibility

so both brothers will soon gather and xie-jing-xian can take his old office
he stepped down as an imperial secretary when he was sent to tibet
it was during the earlier days of the an-lu-shan rebellion
which in my straightforward opinion was due to the flabbiness of the government

the ensuing turmoil engulfed the empire in a vicious storm
whereby the whole world was reduced to piles of smoking ruins
the mandarin duck roof tiles of the emperor's palace were smashed
the kingfisher feather curtains hung before empty harem rooms

the imperial guards were all murdered on their patrols
the imperial armories were sacked and the weapons taken
many of the higher officials escaped with the emperor
his family and the patriotic officers were in great distress

at that time you railed against corrupt officials to your older brother
and you were the first to come up with a plan to oust the rebels
you influenced guo-zi-yi to emulate xiao-he of the han dynasty
your skills were heeded by fan-ju and other military leaders

enemy bodies littered the way over tai mountain to shan-si
as rivers of blood flooded the storied canals of he-nan
in fu-kou the troops massed for another assault against the enemy
the danger of the occupation of the passes by an-lu-shan began to lessen

then emperor su-zong was able to return to his throne in chang-an
and he made his state coach ready for the journey home
when the emperor then showed his great mercy for his loyal followers
you were newly appointed to the privy chambers of the court

your rewards were greater than those of wei-zhang or he-qu-bing
your education rivaled the standards of ying-yang and xu-zheng

you came to the court like a circling phoenix coming to earth
you carefully rejected the bad officials who wished to be your associates

as an assistant to the emperor you were as wise as sung-yu
your strategical advice made one think of the famous rang-ji
you have been a mirror which has enlightened my thoughts
your instructions have been as effective as the hoe for fallow land

i have read your recent writings which reminded me again
how much you once praised my work and recommended me to others
now i am only a white-headed old man filled with misery
but even the times of dark clouds may retreat for a while

your good work in tibet will be a lasting boon to the country
how does your body feel after the rigors of such a trip
you might be surprised that i remain here as if only for the succulent oranges
while really my usual food consists mainly of wild lentils and peas

for the last ten years i have been forced to take medicines for my illness
countless miles from chang-an i have made friends with lumberjacks and fishermen
for a long while i suffered calumnities as did yang-xiong when he was exiled
i am like zou-yang who so regretted becoming an official for a fief prince

i am surprised now that the autumn fireflies are here again
i can't even remember how many months i have spent in jiang-ling
i am trapped here in the fogs and rains of the gorges of the yang-zi
but now i wish to see the land between the big river and the huai up to meng-zhu

even though the capital of the empire is secure again under the emperor
still many difficulties remain in liao-dong and along the seashore
i trust you will do your utmost to help our beloved homeland
and hope you will send me your new poems to encourage me to write more

murphy grateful for his old friends
5/10/2009 8:44 AM

von zach XVIII,58

i mourn the death of secretary li-zhi-fang

i received word of your serious illness only recently
it has not yet been a year and you are now gone
i wished to visit your grave and express my affection for you
so i turned my sad boat back and have come to pay my respects

we two have been friends since our early childhood
why is it that death has now intervened to keep us apart forever
in these difficult times i long for you, but in vain
in jiang-ling my copious tears only add to the lakes and the rivers

you were especially gifted in your literary works
and his majesty has lost a most capable envoy to foreign lands
the official historian will record your exemplary diplomatic record
and poets will disseminate your beautiful verses among themselves

only a few friends have come to visit your gravesite here
many cobwebs hang over your coffin in its place of honor
your soul is now far away from the capital of chang-an
and your relatives must come a long way to take you back there

there visitors may come to see your gravesite left reverently untended
and you will no longer appear at court as an adviser to the emperor
the hostile fall weather is now withering the spring grasses we shared
it will soon be gone like you, an honored son of the imperial house

murphy religiously reading the obituaries in the new york times
5/13/2009 9:47 AM

von zach XVIII,59

a repetition of the mourning

my tears can not be stopped as i mourn for you
i am here, a white-haired old man, consumed by your death
our long friendship has come to a shattering end
only my transient life sill floats in this world

the rain in the yang-zi valley wets the mourning flags
the wind off the dong-ting lake scatters the autumn leaves
our august emperor must also be consumed by sadness
having lost one of his most trusted and gifted servants

murphy growing ever more lonely in his exile
5/13/2009 10:00 AM

von zach XVIII,60

sitting alone

disconsolate i turn away from the sadness of fall
supported by my cane i turn my back to the city wall
when the water level falls, river rocks appear
when the sky has no clouds one sees the farthest mountains

as a hermit i could accept with pleasure illness and senile decay
as a small official of yan-wu i was disloyal in wishing for solitude
i look with complete envy on the solitary bird at dusk
the light touches his wings as he returns to the forest

murphy learning the ways of the eremite
5/14/2009 8:31 AM

von zach XVIII,61

i lament the death of li-yi, officer of the chancellery cabinet (1 of 2)

the literary brilliance of an entire generation has perished with you
now under the ground where you will serve yan-luo-wang
you hves passed beyond and i will never see you again
in the twilight of my life i have lost a warm and good friend

now in these short winter days your coffin lies in the mei-ling mountains
it is cold in these heights, the withered leaves of the cassia have all fallen
who else now remembers you as an official in the cabinet offices
carrying a sable's tail and wearing a golden cicada as emblems of your rank

murphy watching the line of dominos fall one by one
5/14/2009 8:42 AM

von zach XVIII,62

i lament the death of li-yi, officer of the chancellery cabinet (2 of 2)

together we once entered the palace gate at chang-an, the one with blue chains
then when you were dispatched south to si-chuan i didn't even get to say goodbye
your coffin passed through jiang-ling here on its way back to the capital
here between the yang-zi and the han rivers i mourn your death

i am reading and rereading your letters one after another
and i have my son searching through my poetry for those i wrote for you
the official historian will describe you as a loyal son of the dynasty
you need not worry that the entries will be less than laudatory

murphy indulging in an old man's need for nostalgia
5/14/2009 8:50 AM

von zach XVIII,63

at a banquet in the home of imperial commissioner wang i write two poems (1 of 2)

liu-bang once recalled han-xin from the home he had fled to
the people persuaded xie-an to give up his life as a hermit to serve them
i too have fled the world and wander about aimlessly
all this time the affairs of the world have grown more difficult

when i was living in the hostel you often invited me to your home
the conversations there have given me many new perspectives
as a pedestrian talentless man i feel free to be idle
but with your talent why remain an idle coiled dragon in the mud

murphy egging on others when he is fearful of failure
5/14/2009 9:06 AM

von zach XVIII,64

at a banquet in the home of imperial commissioner wang i write two poems (2 of 2)

your beneficence shows sympathy for these old white haired temples
you regale me at this joyous banquet far into the evening
i seek to console myself in my old age by singing my own verses
the copious mugs of wine you offer have loosened my tongue

there is armed conflict all around this unhappy country
only your home in jiang-ling is safe on a high mountain
the bright moon has set and its face no longer reflects from the waters
drunkenly i wend my way home supported by my friends

murphy at the age when he can afford to be indulged a bit
5/14/2009 9:13 AM

von zach XVIII,65

too long away from home

when always a visitor one becomes astute in grading hospitality
when always away from home one becomes attuned to the feelings of crowds
my crinkled old visage just makes me laugh at myself the more
while it seems to anger the young officers who despise me the most

i am as sad as wang-can when he left chang-an
i weep like jia-yi about the problematic times
why is it that only the foxes among the officials now speak
when in our troubles we clearly have need of wolves and tigers

murphy the half-breed passing as white
5/14/2009 9:21 AM

von zach XVIII,66