

on double nines

last year i spent this day climbing the mountain north of qi-xian
and today i am at the same height on the shore of the fou river
unfortunately my hair has grown whiter and will never be the same
i face the countless new chrysanthemums with my aged shame

he confusions of these times have not stopped and i have wandered far from home
the efforts of my trips begin to tell and i am still dependent on others
i finish my wine and remember back to incidents ten years ago
my heart breaks when i remember being with the emperor in his pleasure palace on li mountain.

murphy pushing back the table at the end of a pleasurable meal
3/18/2008 4:16 PM

von zach X,1

around evening

i stand on the shore of the stream where the water is the deepest
evening approaches as clouds accumulate in the mountains
shivering flowers are hidden by the tangled grass
a night bird searches for a concealed branch to roost upon

when will i ever return to my native land
just now in autumn my heart is filled with bitter grief
life has proceeded hopelessly and cannot be restored
the hair at my temples is white silk now

murphy having begun to wander in the evening as a habit
3/19/2008 8:13 AM

von zach X,2

being away from home

the wind brings showers to the stairs
the moon still hides behind the wall
in the distance the woods of full autumn
half the ridge is hidden by evening clouds

the withered leaves have mostly fallen
the flowers have lost most of their smell
turning, my look at the town of long-zhou is blurred by tears
since it is now bright lit by an autumn moon

murphy stopping at his favorite place to gaze at the distance
3/19/2008 8:26 AM

von zach X,3

in the party of the prefect wang from long-zhou, i answer a poem of my eleventh motherly uncle
about the pain of our separation

the rustle of the leaves fills the many passing ravines
the high cliff walls stretch up to the blue heavens
our boat rows away from the picturesque town
out on the waves is the party of parting

this nice togetherness is bound not to last
why is this life so filled with misery
i have grown very thin in my prolonged sadness
the rebels are still thick around here as hedgehogs

my uncle regrets our departure in this cold season
and the imperial commissioner takes pity on him with the gift of a coat
a snow goose with a yellow beak spends the evening on the sandy shore
she seems to have lost all her companions and makes plaintive sounds

murphy snowed in the hunting cabin but toasty warm by the wood fire
3/19/2008 8:47 AM

von zach X,4

in long-zhou i escort deferentially my 24th motherly uncle who proceeds to his new post in qing-cheng

i have heard from the magic slipper-mules of wang-qiao
the shouts of the court astrologer that you must return to chang-an
how was it that the imperial commissioner from yi-zhou
was suddenly picked to be the district judge of qing-cheng

it is truly sad that he cannot return to the mountains of shen-si
as a consequence he is now drunk on the waves of the four river
qing-cheng has always been a subordinated rank
no wonder my uncle is sad in his the heart at his transfer

murphy arguing with the teachers while new head of their union
3/19/2008 9:07 AM

von zach X,5

in the party on the east tower of long-zhou; i give deferential escort my 11th motherly uncle when
he proceeds to the district qing-cheng. i receive the sign hun as a rhyme

on the high town wall a mighty tower rises
although it is an old building the red varnish still shines
we are more than a hundred feet up above things
the four directions have gates so one can see into the distance

although some guests come by cart and horse
usuaually one hears nothing here of the noisy world
our eyes search out the river on which our friend leaves
we are all here at the parting party to comfort him

now is the end of autumn and the beginning of winter
the party of the double nines already in the past, nature seems sadder than ever
the weather has turned cold and the birds now all hide
the icy dew penetrates to the roots of the grass

today i give deferential escort to my beloved uncle
i gather a thousand thoughts as i stare at the wine mug
doesn't it bother him that the entire country is filled with rebels
does he not know the risks he is about to take

nevertheless a man of high standing has no time for such thoughts

for the longest he has tirelessly served the emperor
alone in the wind i look at the departing and almost cry aloud
as i begin to blubber i try to control myself

murphy taking his leave toward texas harder than ever
3/19/2008 9:25 AM

von zach X,6

to the south of long zhou

on the high rise between ba-jun and long-zhou
one always looks at the mountains above the valleys
but how would one anticipate the blue lake
stretching to cover over a thousand square yards

to the south stretches the long way to long-zhou
an artery all the way to the middle of the ba stream
this lake covered with lotus flowers reaches to the next district
along its shore are connecting paddy fields

the brilliant sky adds nothing of visual importance
merely outlining the magnificence of the heights
the meadows of the mountains will produce no crops this year
but the luxuriant paddy fields stand in stark contrast

the clear waters of the lake produce many fish
and the shore is outlined with many trees
especially i marvel at the fragrant maple
which now in the spring are magnificent

to the south lies a commemorative temple of emperor han-gao-zu
whose priests spend their days bustling about
they sing and dance the time away, garments aflutter
they are an old cult and grown exceedingly brainless

in the high hall of the temple stands the life-size statue of the emperor
his enlightenment is preserved as cleanliness after death
he might enjoy the shores of the lonely lake himself
if he were to partake of the wine and food offered to stone

the excessive sacrificial cult has always done the same
and is not limited to this lake and this one place
everywhere around is filled with the sounds of war
and my eyes widen in this glance at the earth around the scene

since my youth i have sought out such places for a hermitage
but as of now i hold no hope for such in these times of trouble
i stop my horse and seek a fishing boat
i would like to visit here to assuage my grief

murphy wondering yet again why the rich don't enjoy their privilege
3/20/2008 8:25 AM

von zach X,7

a fast boat trip

when i offer to escort my friend cang-xi-xian on his way
the weather is cold in the mountains and the rains incessant
i was afraid that a horse could not bring me back
so i procured a boat for my return through this weather

i see green mountain tops and marvel as they pass
i see flashes of yellow as we pass pomelo and orange trees
the waves of the big river gently rock the boat
i sit quietly and am in the best of moods

murphy for once without external pressures
3/20/2008 8:39 AM

von zach X,8

i part from yan (2nd of his clan) as he returns to chang-an to start his new position as master of ceremony in tai-chang-si

with this parting who will keep sharp eyes on me
i who have gone to ruin with age and sickness
i pour my tears toward the setting sun
i watch the dust recede in the distance

as night descends i hear the neighbors sing sad songs
i have gotten used to the customs in si-chuan
i am ashamed that i have not repaid the emperor for his mercy

here far from the action i hear of great parties now in the capital

the rebels to the east of tai shan mountain are now scattered
the court accepts all petitions for appointment of new officials
the death of general shi-chao-yi has loosened everything
pray write to me and report the doings to my distant exile

murphy beginning the dizziness of old age
3/20/2008 8:57 AM

von zach X,9

i send these verses to the district judge pei from nan-bu, after i have learned of the visit of auditor yuan from chang-an who will examine the criminal charges of pei

one knows of the modesty of the life of judge pei
how he sat in his offices quietly and heard his cases
everyone knew he, like confucius, drank only water
men like him are models of deportment like jun-bu-yi

you have certainly added good input to the throne
and the auditor, should be approached with this in mind

because of great probity you have been greatly envied in your time
many bad people have in fact been moved to slander

soon you will return from your unjust ordeal
yet, meanwhile, your hair may be turned to white
the imperial auditor will surely show his usual even-handedness
he has been known for a long time for his upright heart

murphy holding the hand of the supplicant
3/20/2008 9:22 AM

von zach X,10

i see rain come down in the distance

far out there i see the rain falling

i stand alone on the shore of the big river
i don't especially care whether it rains or not
but i worry about the battle flags not flapping

in the mountains they are preparing for the enemies fall push
our advantage in sheng-qiao hangs in the balance
the turfan area are sworn allies with us by marriage
so they will be on our side regardless

murphy reading the war news in the morning
3/21/2008 9:23 AM

von zach X,11

critical times

you, gao-shi, acquired fame earlier in your life than general an-hui
you have commanded your army with telling strategies
yet your letters from yu-lei are full of requests
you fear the encirclement of the troops at song-zhou

now finally is understood the folly of entanglement with the turfan
the marriage of the princess has brought no advantage
who now holds the area of the kukunor
the turfan, who gather around like sated falcons of the hunter

murphy drinking his beer in celebration of the victory
3/21/2008 9:48 AM

von zach X,12

awaiting an imperial commissioner

the land to the north of han river is full of wolves and jackals
the land to the west of ba river is hardly accessible
blood covers the carts of the different military leaders
no one returns from the land of the turfan any more

the plank road is burnt, we are completely isolated
general yan wu is probably stranded somewhere out there
i fully expect an announcement to arrive at any moment
full of heavy worries i await the arrival of an imperial commissioner

murphy stuck in downtown traffic on friday afternoon
3/21/2008 10:01 AM

von zach X,13

militias depart for the protection of the borders

for every ten families of the village only a few men remain
no one can defend them from the troubles in the mountains
on the streets one meets only the wailing few
there are no songs sung now in the marketplace

i am like a piece of wood bobbing on the waves
everywhere are the militia with belted scabbards, lances on shoulders
the regular troops could not penetrate to si-chuan
what in the end will become of us

murphy in the fourth quarter, with no good choices left
3/21/2008 10:14 AM

von zach X,14

the yu-yang cavalry of the prince li-guo from yong

the light cavalry of yu-yang is experienced and has always fought with courage
now they are being led by the esteemed imperial prince from yong
now the wild leaders who earlier sided with an-lu-shan
rush to submit from fear of their leader's death

those who hang back and delay
certainly pursue the policy of folly
an-lu-shan built his fortress in the north
xiong-wu was said to be impregnable

now finally after a long defense it begins to fall
an-lu-shan himself has fled farther north
i would like to launch an arrow to the inhabitants of yan
and with it a message with a question for them

do you think that you might submit today after the blow of our forces
while many of your leaders hasten to submit
that we might need only 100,000 more troops
and the cavalry of yu-yang is ready to perform that mission

murphy with the bit in his teeth
3/21/2008 10:27 AM

von zach X,15

the west mountains, three poems. (1 of 3)

the edge of china and barbarians runs along the desolate west mountains
beyond them the turfan live next to the everlasting snow
fortifications have been built high in these mountains
provisions for the troops must be dragged to the sky

our generals in si-chuan are deployed to offer opposition to the enemy
barbarians who have submitted to us aid our war effort
now the turfan have broken their word of peace
and their murderous desire becomes more dangerous each day

murphy counting cards to make a coup later
21.03.2008 16:49

von zach X,16

the west mountains, three poems (2 of 3)

the garrisons of three towns have much to complain about
thousands of miles to patrol against the enemies autumn inroads
the fights have overwhelmed huo-jing-xian
a deep snow has cut us off from sun-zhou

the storm continues to blow around the tents of headquarters
while the imperial envoys shiver in their furs
overall we see the barbarian fiends are in their battlements
if i think about the facts i am moved to grieve

murphy tasting the ashes of defeat
21.03.2008 17:10

von zach X,17

the west mountains, three poems (3 of 3)

although our young, courageous deeply penetrate into the land of the enemies
and the fortress at sun-zhou has still fallen
the horses of the cavalry sent by can-ya have no more fodder
provision ships from guan-kou are few and far between

the diplomats speak of the pacification of the border
the generals plan further intimidation of the enemy
this morning the magpies and ravens seemed happy
perhaps they foresee a triumphal return of forces singing of victory

murphy with vivid opium dreams
3/21/2008 5:24 PM

von zach X,18

i express my grief.

the unrest has become much worse than before
though the truth of the rumors cannot be checked
if only our ruler had listened to his advisors before
only in the gravest dangers does he choose competent statesmen as of yore

overall the turfan have become a mold on society
everywhere one sees their yellow turbans
the palace continues to act as if in the sui dynasty
how often they have been burned by the enemy

murphy sorting out the small truths in the morning papers
3/22/2008 10:05 AM

von zach X,19

on ba mountain

on ba mounain i met an9* envoy of the court
he informed me he had just come from shan-zhou
and since the rebels were still active
he could not now return to any capital

violent cold holds sway in the country of shan-zhou
the old emperor is there, the turfan have burned chang-an
the old emperor has been placed in a diisagreeable position
why, oh why do the ministers not scucceed in helping him

murphy sipping his first coffee in the morning chill
3/22/2008 10:26 AM

von zach X,20

early blossoms.

is chang-an now in our hands or not yet
i have met only one person so far who might tell me
it is now in the the last month of the year
the flowers have already blossomed here in the bend of ba river

the apricot blossoms blend well with the snow
plum buds are a bit more shy and wait for true spring
i deplore the chaos of the rebellion, its dust and darkness
i wonder if my white temples have taken on new light

murphy vain as ever looking in the mirror
3/22/2008 10:38 AM

von zach X,21

on the city wall

in lang-zhou spring has come to change everything
the desolate town is now green and the days are longer
the wind blows the blossoms and the waters all rise
as once for duke mu of chola eight strong horses follow the emperor

the court with all the ministers follow
it is as once emperor han-wu-ti visited tai-shan
from a distance i have followed this imperial expedition
it will not last long and the desolate areas will be mercifully passed

murphy tagging along with the entourage
3/22/2008 10:53 AM

von zach X,22

i escort li-ye, new president of the ministry of justice

when you wished to return to chang-an my prince
it was already in the hands of the wild turfan
now, full of tears, you wish to reunite with his majesty on the run
on horseback you have returned from the palace in lo-yang

i spend my days in the far reaches of si-chuan
where now the spring winds blow by the big stream and the han river
although i have removed myself to the mountains as once did qie-zi-tui
i am still full of longing for the emperor's palace

murphy sitting on the fence chewing on johnson grass
3/22/2008 2:40 PM

von zach X,23

departure from lang-zhong to return to zi-zhou

before me posionous snakes, behind me fierce tigers
i travel for days without seeing a village nor anyone
the wind above the big river blows inhospitably cold
the clouds cover me and seem to touch the ground

the woods of the mountains bring a sadness
the sky is murky as trying to weep its rain
my small daughter is ill, my wife filled with worry
i am filled with the thought of returning to cheng-du-fu

now the flowers i worshiped thre months ago get no attention
it has been three months since i last saw my family
only one hasty letter reached me on my travels
when will i finally leave this home full of grief and misery

murphy going through a bad spell
3/22/2008 2:54 PM

von zach X,24

at the end of the year

at the end of the year i am still on the road
war rages here at the edge of the border
the snowy mountains of si-chuan are now engulfed
drums and war trumpets shatter the calm of the town

blood flows daily thoroughout the home country
no one can fetter the leader of the rebellion and bring him to the emperor
one must at this time think only of himself

yet in my exile my patriotic feelings stir

murphy wondering about the value of owning property
3/23/2008 2:30 PM

von zach X,25

my younger brother du-zhan returns to the straw hall at chang-du to check whether everything is in order; with this opportunity i show him these verses.

it has been long since i have corresponded of wandering
it is now that you have followed me here
you now know exactly the way along the river

because you have returned from zi-zhou to the straw hall

you must pay attention to the numbers of ducks and geese
and be sure you never leave open the gate
also note whether the bamboo shade should wither the eastern gove
you must plant new shrubs there in this last month of the year

murphy enmeshed in the affairs of family
3/23/2008 2:15 PM

von zach, 26

i dedicate the song of the peach-coloured bamboo stem to governor zhang

on a mighty rock in the middle of the stream peach-colored bamboo flourish
blue waves lap around them as they grow to their abundance
the stem when cut is the delicate shade of purple jade
no one can keep the people from this treasure

governor zhang-yi from the province zi-dong
has brought for us an entire bundle of it
the admiration of the guests fills the hall

out of pity for this old man i receive two stems

i scratch them and they make a metallic hard noise
i am preparing for a new trip to te southeast
i will go by oared boat within the week to bo-di-cheng fortress
on the way i shall be in darkness and dragens will surely want them

perhaps i will be forced to defend myself with a sword
i will be forced to say, stems, stems do not forsake me
you have become for me most special
do not honor the water and become a dragon

do not jump in the river to transform oneself
stay with me and thereby lend thy help
i wish to become a hermit on jun mountain
on its blue peak above dung-ting lake

in these riots everything is panthers and tigers
if i lose these two stems where shall i turn

murphy wanting desperately to believe the medicine priest
3/23/2008 3:25 PM

von zach X,27

the story of the winter hunt of governor chang-yi of zi-zhou

have you not seen the brave cavalry of east si-chuan
when they hunt it is as if they pursued an enemy
the governor last night sent out 3000 wild warriors
in the early morning they encircled the game and advanced in military order

already seven or eight four-legged and two-legged are killed
all day the slaughter will continue until it is dark
then, before the headquarters lie nine dead rhonoceri
dead bears are bound to the humps of the camels

from all directions for 100 li come the dead
they have stripped the cold land clean of game
the song bird called the ju-yu does not fly away
but hides in the thickets and brambles

they have little meat and hardly any taste
yet they were scooped up into the hunters nets
the spring chase with the young spared is also an imperial right
now the two rituals are taken up by the provincial governors

the five horses of the governor indicate he is also censor
and he is entrusted as head of the armed services
he holds within himself the greatest of powers
his orders and commands become the law

during all this a worried old man wanders
for ten years he has seen various red flags of war
yet the order and discipline is still appreciated
only i wish that all this might be applied to capturing enemies

of what use finally is all the hunting of hares and foxes
no living creature left in the grasslands
it is as if the sky son is no more in his palace in xian-yang
although the court has not yet met such misfortune

how can i not show my grief if the emperor again must flee
how can i not show my grief if the emperor goes on the run again

murphy pledging his life, his weal, his sacred honor
3/24/2008 8:19 AM

von zach X,28

the mountain cloister.

the cloister lies close to the land high on a cliff
different out-buildings cling, scattered about
the earliest statues of buddha are no longer

their many distinctions are covered by moss

the old hall of the cloister is still kept up
but the statues of the saintly images are all now dust
it seems to me that all the buddhas are complaining
all this decay will draw tears from the religious

governor chang-yi comes riding a horse decked in purple
his is a state visit of some importance
he has managed to calm a thousand square miles of the country
now he plans a long retreat on the shores of the great river

the monks sadly gather in their soiled indigo robes
they announce the ridge poles and beams are ready to fall down
my lord turns to his master of the eschequer
who, sighing, displeased, opens his donation-bag

i am told that soon tala trees will grow all around the restored buildings
certainly the storied heavens will be proud of that
and devils and demons alike will be freed from any envy of such progress
thus will the governor provide for his soldiers, altogether an excellent man

the governor gives to all assembled his presence
and shows how his beneficence is thus granted
at the end of the year the cold winds level all
but then comes spring to transform the desolate woods

if the poor lose their sure sanctuary
the thinking noble understands evil will follow
when i see the desperate plight of the believers
i say to myself, it is always good to cling close to the breast

murphy happy in his snug hideaway
3/24/2008 8:54 AM

von zach X,29

i am about to leave for nu and chu and take leave of governor chang -yi. i leave behind this poem
for which i receive the rhyme word liu.

many years have passed badly since i came to si-chuan
my children have grown well but i feel i have become old and nasty
i fear my open character has become evil
and that too much drinking has further damaged my health

lately i have grown to drinking while alone
i have ameliorated my views and hide behind other people
earlier i was like a fish fed in a pond
now i am a dog without a master's food

i am no longer tied to my parents and their house
i am free to travel without restriction and do what i will
the people i see are half old friends. half new
now we will see from my presents who is true or not

i do have a small boat which fell into my possession
i use it to get to the tower with the tall willow trees
how kind of governor chang-yi to make a party for me
there in the tower where they all are waiting

before the tower one has always seen cavalry
behind the curtains the guests all await my entrance
courageous warriors swing proud their red flags
i will not easily forget the pomp given me today

the sun has gone down behind the kun-lun mountains
birds have begun their evening twitterings
i will not fear the waves i meet on the way to the yang-ze
nor will the three gorges and their noise frighten me away

what i fear most are the numerous robbers
and the recent sight of government officials on the run
the news from china proper is interrupted
and i do not know how things are faring there

in the end i must leave here promptly
and take my chances there with the barbarians
i wish to follow the clouds east to visit the temple at tai-yi
then i will follow my sails to the south and the land of wu

if a messenger is found i will send you a letter
i will always think of you and am full of longing

murphy doing his duty and keeping in touch
3/24/2008 10:13 AM

von zach X, 30

the recapture of the capital chang-an

again the report of the recapture of the capital from the turfan
i hear that a large number of the enemy have been killed
now the officials should rally there around the new emperor
he will return the moment there is no apparent danger

after victory it is always the many useless courtiers who are the first
the actual good deed was accomplished by only a select few
oh, do not now allow in chang-an that any new sad winds should arise
from the moans of the people lamenting a falling into the hands of the enemy

murphy hoping against hope against all the odds
3/25/2008 4:04 PM

von zach X,31

i dedicate this poem to my friend he-lan xian on his resignation.

brown sparrows feast in the overgrown paddies
then fly up cheerfully from the prickly thicket
how must your heart must hurt having been a scholar who went hungry
the people have no sympathy for what you have offered

the old warhorse is quite tired and tosses his head
the blue falcon is saddened to have been tamed in his time
worthy men are not honored by the vagaries of the world
there is too often loss, natural hunger and misery

indeed the natural destiny of the empire has been such a case
the world still suffers excessively from the wars
i sing this sad song because my hair has turned white
and you leave me now in the spring to move to distant xiang-wu

i am inured to the yams from the slopes of min mountain
you now prefer the vegetable soup from the jian-li lake region
the life we lead is indeed hard on us
those who love are separated by fate or by death

murphy kicking the street for leading somewhere
3/25/2008 4:31 PM

von zach X,32

why i am sad, 5 poems (1 of 5)

why is it that after all the riches heaped upon generals
the war has already lasted for year and years
they have been for all we give them a total embarrassment
how have they finally repaid the mercy of the emperor

new fights have always led to increasing losses
our only good generals it seems are those honored in antiquity
such is the fate of li-zhi-fang losing to the turfan
where of where can we find a second zhang-qian

murphy remembering bradley with fondness
3/25/2008 4:53 PM

von zach X,33

why i am sad, 5 poems (2 of 5)

in the lands of yu and ji there are still snakes and wild boars
in the middle of china tigers and wolves still rage
provincial governors have sent no tribute to chang-an this spring
imperial messengers follow each other to the colonies incessantly

the emperor should give up his fixation on annexing kukunor
and leave the insurgent yue-shang alone in annam
the esteemed prince should finish his fight with them
and attack the recalcitrant, xie-song and le-huai-xian, instead

murphy getting in the first blow at the largest opponent
3/26/2008 8:26 AM

von zach X,34

why i am sad, 5 poems (3 of 5)

the ships and cars can carry tribute to lo-yang with ease
it is central to all who wish to add their share
daily we hear that the red tribute rice does not get through to chang-an
already this winter there is talk of moving the capital to lo-yang in the spring

the emperor should search for security in strong connections
it is the only way to insure a rich life for everyone
if nothing else then thrift and justice will prevail
for the rebels were originally his loyal subjects

murphy using occam's razor to make sense
3/26/2008 8:43 AM

von zach X,35

why i am sad, 5 poems (4 of 5)

wind and frost press sharply on the red princes of the dynasty
while the green governors from the house of li continually decline
earlier there was never a governor who served the emperor
who did not take care to appear at all the audiences

the old custom of entrusting the upper provinces to competent relatives is gone
gone too are the imperial decrees about the restriction of luxuries in the palces
everone should obey the old method of fief rentals to the princes
then one could hear the flute music of the emperor shun throughout the land

murphy betting on the favorite for a change
3/26/2008 8:56 AM

von zach X,36

why i am sad, 5 poems (5 of 5)

although an-lu-shan is already destroyed, the people are still rioting
although the troops are loyal, commanding generals still hesitate to submit to the emperor
in the ceremonies where the generals come to the altar to pledge their fealty
why is the emperor dilatory in stating his wish for more bravery to be shown

district judges appointed by his majesty are also afraid
they pretend all is possible in order to hold on to their posts
i would wish for an imperial decree showing sympathy for the people
severity against any and all miseries, and a renewed call to people's honor

murphy grousing into his guinness about the boss

von zach X,37

i send these verses to my friend he-lan-xian, 2nd of his clan

the court and the people have barely finished their joyous parties
the emperor has returned to chang-an, but the riots have continued
everyone has been in exile away from the capital
we have all become hairy old men in our waiting

in spite of our age we were dispersed, separated
i was blown like the thistle down to the big stream area of si-chuan
do not speak now of our enforced separateness
remember how often before we ate together and enjoyed our drink

murphy sorting through the gleanings knowing famine is coming
3/26/2008 11:09 AM

von zach X, 38

i sit in my sadness

from my high-situated study chamber i stare out at the land
i am overwhelmed by grief, i hunch down on my cushion
in the tenth month the cold of the muntains is clearly felt
fogs from the river obscure the nearby town

foreign troups occupied jia-ming and moved out most of the han
young barbarians of the quan have taken over zuo-dan
all day i have thought that i must flee from here
i cannot now think about returning to chang-an

murphy counting his chickens to make sure
3/26/2008 11:23 AM

von zach X,39

always on the run.

always on the run i continue to add to my years
this perpetual hiding tires both bones and muscles
education in the shi-ging and shu-ging have disappeared behind walls
low standing people now wave their flags as they order others

some worthwhile news still trickles out of the present palace
though i have become fatalistic about what is happening
the good times of the old emperor tang-gao-zi
shall rise up from all this blood, and come again

murphy with enough money in his pocket to pay for a nice dinner
3/26/2008 11:34 AM

von zach X,40

the song of the long-hou mountains.

east of lang-zhou lies the white ling mountains
to the north lies the green yu-tai mountains
i note both are completely covered with spruce
clouds are steady but the weather is ready to open up

the waves in the stream seem ready to topple the rocks
they hang there though, almost teetering, but steadfast
i cannot experience whether they roll or not
it is like here the foot of the mountains are filled with demons

i have just noted the massive strength of these mountains

they rival the sung and the gigantic hwa massifs
in the middle plains of china war still rages
why, oh why can i not return to my home country

i am stuck here on the green mountain
my arm rest nothing but a reed hut

murphy tiring of the magnificence of the view
3/26/2008 3:36 PM

von zach X,41

the song of the long river

what compares with the color of the jia ling river
it is as if black indian ink had married with jade

i especially like the sun glinting on the waves
enhanced by the returning spring along the sandy banks

the fishermen of si-chuan charge past me in all directions
then quickly water birds bring back fish in their beaks
this special scenery tears the heart from my body
there are few comparable places in the world than south of lang-zhou

murphy watching a spring training game on a glorious march day
3/26/2008 3:51 PM

von zach X,42

in the western part of si-chuan i hear that the capital chang-an is recaptured ; i escort ban-hun, an official at da-li-si as he reaches his new residence

it is said that the forefather temple of our dynasty is again in our hands
the singing phoenix car of the emperor can now be headed back
the entire capital has watched for this car to return in state
the red dressed masters of the ceremonies are again in their places

beyond the sword tower mountains in si-chuan it is not yet spring
it is rare that anyone should travel at this time of year
i am full of worry that he must travel from that western country
the insurgency is cleared only from the area around chang-an

murphy with the crowd assuming victory in the eighth but knowing it is still iffy
3/26/2008 4:07 PM

von zach X,43

i escort the officials of the da-li-si when they when they open chang-an

even today the robbers still exist, and i am ashamed
i served under the previous emperor when all uprisingr transpired
i give praise to you who have not forgotten your emperor
i envy you for your return to shen-si

you will advise the new emperor when he comes
you will meet all your old friends at court
you know how my hasnderchief is always soaked with tears
as i have continued to discuss state affffairs with you

murphy nosing around the old place of business with no good in mind
3/27/2008 8:12 AM

von zach X,44

driving a boat on the stream

the two boats, side by side, have no need for oars
they drift on a flat, slow-running stream which has no waves
the long day has been spent in our heavy drinking
the courtesans silk garments are mirrored on the surface

we have had our music despite the riots
sometimes i even allow a little pleasure in my response
i think of the pure wei river in my old country
on whose shore the blossoms should have just come in

murphy in an idyllic place in bad times
3/27/2008 8:23 AM

von zach X,45

in the pavilion on the shore i take leave of xi-sheng-zi, the secretary of the governor of yei-zhou. i receive the sign wu as a rhyme.

the shade from the pasture falls on the tent where the party is given
the wine jugs rival the flood of the streams
against expectations we have all arrived in a foreign land
the party makes mockery of my sadness at your leaving

all around the sand butterflies flit on the wind
the bathing ducks are a pleasant sight in this warm weather
my feelings of being old are exacerbated now
a feeling of desuetude descends to my shoulders

murphy sucking it up as the tide recedes
3/27/2008 8:38 AM

von zach V,46

in the retinue of governor wang of lang-zhou on the last day of the first month we go to the stream pavilion of the huang family. 2 poems (1 of 2)

the mountains extend as if they did not wish to end
the stream is quiet as if it did not wish to flow
i take little notice if the flowers change along the shore
only birds flying with the boat indicate that we move

the dancers are splendid in their red greasepaint
it is times like these that make me curse my white hair
if wang does not shower me with affection
i feel the holiday might take a melancholy turn

murphy fighting the megrims in the midst of frolic
3/27/2008 9:06 AM

von zach X, 47

in the retinue of governor wang of lang-zhou on the last day of the first month we go to the stream
pavilion of the huang family. 2 poems (2 of 2)

a path leads through the soft, golden sand to the pavilion
nothing else is there but the green fragrant grass
some butterflies dance over the meadows
a trio of mandarin ducks bob in the stream

about evening the colors of the smoke and the flowers mix together
a wind rises and the smell of the dancers emerge from their costumes
it does not now require a mellifluous flute
this frail old man has let his sorrow seep away

murphy turning the cajun music up loud in his joy
3/27/2008 9:15 AM

von zach X,48

sad thoughts in spring, 5 poems (1 of 5)

although the world is filled with soldiers
the glint of spring hangs in the air
the western capital chang-an is tired of the hundreds of fights
the northern emperor's palace is filled with scoundrels

the road from chang-an to si-chuan is 3000 miles
and all this is covered with blooming flowers
rhw emperor fled hastily covered with the dust of departure
who will these days provide proper lodging for him

emperor wu-ding of the yin provided proper ethical direction
duke ping of zhou moved the capital to lo-yang and restored the empire
many loyal state servants have vanished into the ground
they would all return to serve the emperor

murphy in a field of blubonnets alongside the road in texas
3/27/2008 10:42 AM

von zach X,49

sad thoughts in spring, 5 poems (2 of 5)

the new year brings back the oriole with her songs again
the old branches cover themselves with again with new blossoms
the sky is blue and the spring wind rolls the curtain of my room
the grass greens, and the spring floods, increases the pond

i am saddened because the imperial army is still far from chang-an
i feel desolate in the midst of dangers which threaten the world
my sideburns turned white a long time before the present
and my tears have long ago crested and ceased to flow

it is not that i no longer have brothers
but what is to prevent our continued separation
in si-chuan the mountains of spring are resplendent
i long to be in the capital but the way there seems ever longer

murphy counting up the proper futures he never had
3/27/2008 10:54 AM

von zach X,50

sad thoughts in spring, 5 poems (3 of 5)

the sun and moon still fight with each other
stars are repeatedly enclosed by the courts of the moon
as long as many worthless minions abound
who can change the dangerous position of events

the throne star da-jie is threatened by outrage
the emperor is left with his harem the stars of the gou-chen
smoke and dust darken the imperial way
the more conservative oldsters try in vain hold back the sky son

the emperor took with him only a few trusted troops
there seem to be few military leaders in his audience
while many competent officials have returned to private life
how will the emperor call them back when they are needed

murphy worried about the rain and when it might fall
3/27/2008 11:09 AM

von zach X,51

sad thoughts in spring, 5 poems (4 of 5)

i hear that riots are again consuming the capital
the news is contradictory, one doesn't know what to believe
soon we are told the emperor will be in lo-yang
others say the envoys have returned to shen-si

the imperial princes complain loudly that they had to flee on stolen horses
the harem ladies cried when they had to mount the car and leave the residence
the emperor was of two minds when he left
the xiao pass to the north or east to the blue sea

i do not venture to guess what politics will bring
there are too many old ministers who are more clever than i
if there is no xi-shao to spill his blood beside the imperial carriage
how can we expect him, indeed, to effect his escape

murphy thinking the impossible thrice before settling down to his brunch
3/27/2008 11:32 AM

von zach X,52

sad thoughts in spring, 5 poems (5 of 5)

i have been told that immediately at the beginning of the imperial escape
many young guard officers took this opportunity to leave the army
as the rice which had been promised did not appear
soldiers threw down their weapons which should have protected the emperor

the tatar hordes took over the halls of state
and streams of princes and dukes poured forth in a river
are there then no more heroes like zi-ti and liu-kun
who got up in the middle of the night for warrior dancing

in the midst of the splendors of spring war has come
and i cry as a hermit for the holy music of the mountains
if there are any virtuous rulers and ministers which remain
one may hope again for the a harmony of the seasons

murphy fighting the fight with no thought of his loss
3/27/2008 11:49 AM

von zach X,53

i try to release my grief and free my thoughts

for ten years the confusion of war has reigned
now the turfan have taken up residence in chang-an
the emperor has surely lost his way
but not like huang-ti searching for the tao in the wilderness of xiang-cheng

he effected his escape suddenly like jin-ming-di
hastened past yu-hu when the acting emperor wang wanted to seize him
robbers have continued to hold sway on the way he went
we have heard nothing of his fate since

beacons illuminated the night, corpses were everywhere
i believe the emperor survives always on the move
and his officials also, still longing for peace
survive to serve again in a successful future

my fear is that the people, without there being a change
will continually be extorted by evil usurpers
my fear is that of an earlier time when no justice prevailed
remember the evil founder cheng-yuan-zhan escaped with his life

i am only an old man on the shore of the big stream

i have done no wrong but everything is different than i expected
my eyes have become clouded and i can see clearly no more
for me, the dust of the future refuses to settle

murphy retired from all the confusion of daily living
3/28/2008 8:21 AM

von zach X,54

in the pavilion on the stream governor wang of lang-zhou gives a retirement party to governor xiao
of sui-zhou.

the pavilion where we say goodbye does not lie in ch'angan
unfortunately this is the beautiful spring in a foreign land
being old i fear the songs will be all too short
in one's grief of old age long songs are more pleasurable

governor wang in his place as beloved host gives a warm party for his guests
his eminence the old governor xiao beams in his joy
the provinces sui-zhou and lang-zhou are neighbors in si-chuan
and both are prosperous enough for the phoenix to alight

murphy pert and partying away
3/28/2008 8:36 AM

von zach X,55

the pavilion of the duke of teng (son of tang-gao zi)

the pavilion with the high terrace of the duke lies on ba mountain
one can still climb the long stairway to get there
the spring is far enough advanced for the orioles to sing
the dogs of the immortals are heard high above in the clouds

the beauty of the mossy rocks in the middle of the stream seize the heart
fully formed blossoms are to be seen in all directions
the people sing these days of the perfection of duke teng
everywhere they are assembled his praise may be heard

murphy winded from his long climb
3/28/2008 8:49 AM

von zach X,56

the taoist cloister

in the green wood high in the winds looms the yu-tai cloister
here in the heights with the gods of the sky is the winding rose way
then come the water spirits ping-yi beating on drums
i imagine the daughter of duke mu plying the music of the flutes

i see blurred in my mind the caves of the lizards below the water surface
the different rock formations remind of quarreling magpies and ravens
i would come to a place like this to grow wings and be wise

i would stay ro fish, and learn to be a master wood carver

murphy in his dream house once again

3/28/2008 10:40 AM

von zach X,57

price teng's pavilion

now it is spring and the mountain way to the duke's pavilion is lonely
he will never pass this way again, nor enter his favorite place
the morning shade of the bamboo still falls on the old walls

the empty hall abounds with the sussuries of the surrounding spruce

the birds return in the evening to the desolate village
the fleeting clouds awaken the overcome traveller's heart
i would have liked to hear the music which was played
when the duke entered here with his thousand retainers

murphy reliving the glory days of his independent teachings
3/28/2008 10:51 AM

von zach X,58

the taositic cloister yu-tai built by prince teng

the hgh pagoda of this cloister was built by prince teng
i have climbed to the top to look at the vestiges of the past

i hear music and imagin'd having interrupted the immortal xiao-shi in his playing
i think of duke teng's writings and the words of confucius found by kung-lu

in this high holy place the gods of the five regions have come
the minds of the ten continents of the world are gathered here
the people of the region often mention hearing flutes
they say wang-xiao plays flutes here which they sometimes hear

murphy finally visiting saint peter's with the masses
3/28/2008 11:05 AM

von zach X,59

the river ferry

in the spring it is difficult to cross the big river
since already in the second month there is strong wind and high waves
the ferryboat is pushed sideways and held there by the wind
large lizards nose around here from their homes in the depths

the white flowers line the banks with their brocade
and the grass of the islands is seductive in its green
i jokingly remark to an angler sitting on the shore
can you really be as happy as you look

murphy content with his limited lot
3/28/2008 11:18 AM

von zach X,60

a cool evening in spring

fogs cover the plains beyond the town
the wind produces whitecaps on the river
the bright colors of spring penetrate the coming darkness
the coolness of the sad evening grows steadily

the drums of the garrison are still heard
but the oriole becomes silent as the woods
suddenly i remember a banquet a few days past
where a woman's sleeve slid silently over my arms

murphy doddering his life away
3/28/2008 3:16 PM

von zach X,61

i remember earlier times, two poems (1 of 2)

i remember the time when emperor su-zong fled to the north
and later returned to xian-yang with his thousand carts and ten thousand riders
the uighurs, the proud sons of the yin mountains, with their blood sweating horses
they helped the emperor drive back an-lu-shan's son who has gone into hiding

shi-si-ming in ye-cheng soon submitted to the emperor
while li-fu-guo the groom from shen-si took power
empress zhang distracted and filled the emperor with high spirits
yet even now the the present emperor must worry on all sides

so it was given to the current emperor dai-cong
to end the confusion in the current court
with a gallant effort he succeeded
he patched the empire together once again

i was once an official who was close to state affairs
and i watched the emperor head the army with efficiency
i saw how the crown prince at that time was also loved by them
and no one dared face him on a field of battle

because however at the wrong time courageous guo-zi-yi
held himself back as the guard of wei-yang palace
he left the western border units alone in their struggle
they had to stand alone against the turfan hordes

these barbarians penetrated the borders with ease
and finally settled themselves on the imperial throne
however the officialdom sided with the emperor dai-zong
and fled with him to safety in shan-zhou

one wishes for a second fu-qie-zi to appear from the north
to swoop down and behead the enemy's king
then old scholars such as myself could retire to be bookworms
and i would no longer need to be a cabinet secretary

murphy working himself out of a job with his efficiency
4/4/2008 2:10 PM

von zach X,62

i remember earlier times two poems (1 of 2)

even in small towns there stood countless houses
more delightfully stood juicy rice, white shining millet
full to overflowing were the public and private granaries
no one menaced the roads of the nine provinces

when departing for a distance one worried not about an auspicious day
the long line of merchant carts held silk fabrics from qi and lu
men ordered the fields, women happily tended the silkworms
the emperor composed the sacrificial songs for the festivals

the entire world together bristled an extended harmony
for over a century people reported no calamities
another shu-sun-tung ordered rites, another xiao-he improved laws
no one ever heard of a silk roll costing ten thousand copper coins

then on one abandoned their farms to bloodshed
and the palaces of lo-yang were not reduced to cinders
a short time ago the turfan relinquished chang-an
and in my upset i have only begun to speak of the unrest

i am merely a humble servant who has no especial strengths
and nevertheless the court has always remembered me
i hope under the present emperor to assist in the renaissance of zhou
yet i remain in the banks of the rivers jiang and han weeping bloody tears

murphy living now only in his dreams
4/10/2008 9:17 AM

von zach X,63

i remember earlier times two poems (2 Of 2)

respectfully i send these verses to censor zhang, tenth of his clan;
resigned governor of east si-chuan, who is to be transferred to chang-an

in yang-chou between the huai river and the sea
there resides an extremely competent man
here now he shines with his golden seal and his violet uniform
made all the more impressive by the greens of spring

he is capable of organizing the heavens and the earth
his constant supply of competent soldiers amazes everyone
east si-chuan cannot be the same without this man
as once xiang-xi could not lose guan-yu

zi--zhou still needs this man like the land of he-nei
was left bereft when the emperor recalled kou-xun
if the emperor in his mercy should ask of a secluded scholar
let him hear not of the old angler here on the banks of the xiang

murphy still able to establish encomiums
4/10/2008 9:44 AM

vonzach X,64

escape from the riots

a fifty year old white-headed man tries to escape
the north and the south have erupted into riots
a coarse garment wraps his rotten bones as he hurries along
he constantly complains that it does not warm him enough

illness has penetrated deep into his frail body
the entire world has been reduced to charred cinders
he moves hither and yon within the known world
no one seems willing to find a place for him

women and children follow along with him
he often gathers them to share their sighs
the old native country is swarming with fresh graves
entire villages are scattered, everyone missing

he cannot seem to find the way in his old country
tears of exhaustion flow here on the shores of the jiang

murphy losing it all in the throes of anger
4/10/2008 10:39 AM

von zach X,65

i intend to depart for jing-zhou and so send these departing verses to my young friend, prefect li
of si-chuan

you are an imperial commissioner of high standing
your presence exceeds that of honored men of antiquity
you have been the prefect of xian-zhou for three years
and in all that long time have not been afforded proper respect

during this long time we have seen only you
but you, a second wen-weng have known how to improve the customs of the land
who would believe that you have not been raised to be a count
and have not received that title and level of salary

on my trip i will probably lose my weird thatch of white hair
in the gulches of the yang-ze i shall become overcome
and where the sky looms over the long cang waters
i will sit lonely and desolate in a small fishing boat

now we are surrounded and engulfed by the rioting
who knows, we may never see each other again
i am left with nothing more than looking out for the spring winds
to flow through the firs of the wang-can in jing-nan

murphy left behind to tend camp while the raiding party goes on
4/10/2008 11:04 AM

von zach X,66

the traveller

i have no one to send my grief about my long stay in si-chuan
my wish to go on to giang-su must remain unfulfilled
giu-giang is still far away, while overall lies the spring grass
my yacht is tied up before the three gorges of the yang-ze

to divert myself i visit the seer at cheng school of technology
i do not wish to show myself a drunkard as once did ministerial secretary bi-zhuo
if the island of the blessed were possible i would like to go there
althought white headed and ill i still have my dreams

murphy patiently waiting for the softer waether of spring
4/10/2008 1:24 PM

von zach X,67

two swallows

in the roadside inn the sight of a swallow pair startles
their beaks are filled with mud ready to stay here like me
they have been escaping the bad weather out in the world
to build a nest warm next to heat and dry from the rain

we share the shelter and pass from the vagaries of wind and storm
they will raise their young in their laboriously built nest
i will leave them this autumn---if the world still exists
so will their young---- out into the war torn world

murphy counting the blessings of the holy father
4/10/2008 2:59 PM

von zach X,68

the mocking bird

where does the mocking bird rest
his arrival always presumes spring
he knows all the birds' songs and sings away
though he preens his feathers as one bird alone

he flies into the thick blossoms to disappear
look, on the high branch, he sings another beguiling song
i wonder why he doesn't sing beyond spring
to stand beside him is to stand before the master

murphy a singular singer
4/10/2008 3:08 PM

von zach X,69

3 poems written on a trip to the si-chuan mountains with wife and children (1 of 3)

in excitement we flee from the numerous bandits
far from the country i have lived in for ten long years
it has been impossible to travel on south to han-gou
so i turn from west si-chuan toward home

i am tired from the worries of the road, though the water still shines
my soul is knocked down so now even the mountains are nothing to me
my entire life is teetering on the edge of dissolving
i have been in fear since the beginning of this trip

murphy coming back from his afternoon constitutional walk
4/10/2008 3:59 PM

von zachX,70

3 poems written on a trip to the si-chuan mountains with wife and children (2 of 3)

the tall trees are brought down by the storm
my thoughts are tangled, confused
my jacket drips in the humid mountain air
the horse neighs and begins to nibble the green grass

the hanging plank way leads around crooked rocks
the bridge is torn away and we must return
when will the day come when weapons will be put to rest
i am ashamed of this constant need to wander

murphy bleary eyed on saturday morning
4/11/2008 8:29 AM

von zach X,71

3 poems written on a trip to the si-chuan mountains with wife and children (3 of 3)

our way soon opens and we are on our way
soon we pass thickets and see the smoke of humans
i hear the servants crasing through the bamboo
i hear the children shout for our return

the hobgoblins and ghosts in the mountain rocks disappear
behind the last curve live the flying foxes and apes
everyone is excited except this lonely man
they wish to comfort me and ease the strains of my journey

murphy wishing everyone would just disappear
4/11/2008 8:37 AM

von zach X,72

farewell at the grave of general fang guan

again i am wandering in a foreign land
i stop my horse and say farewell at general fang's grave
these days no spot of earth can remain dry
the clouds cover everything with their tears

during your life i played guitar with you, learned go from master xie
once ji sha left his sword hanging, and now i am here
here where i see nothing but blossoms in the woods
and when i leave the oriole song goes with me

murphy wailing on his old martin
4/11/2008 9:32 AM

von zach X,73

on the way to my straw hut at cheng-du-fu i pen these verses, and send them on before my arrival, to yan wu duke of zheng-guo (1 of 5)

i owe my happiness to the happy fact you were recently appointed as governor
if only now the villagers treat me as once they did earlier
i've shown neglect in keeping up my spruces and bamboo garden
but i know the fish from the waters of ping cave are quite tasty

i remember i do not have to buy the marvelous bamboo pipes of wine from pi-xian
this delightful liquor was always brought to me by you, yan wu
you, the governor, have always found the path to my gate
how often you have waited upon this concealed old scholar

murphy buying armagnac and preparing a feast for his friend
4/11/2008 10:25 AM

von zach X,74

on the way to my straw hut at cheng-du-fu i pen these verses, and send them on before my arrival, to yan wu duke of zheng-guo (2 of 5)

the clear stream shows everywhere white water chestnuts of spring
i sit in my old garden and breath in earth's freshness
spies have reported no hostile riders on the borders of the snowy mountains
this must be due to the benign presence of yan wu

he awaits my arrival there in cheng-du-fu
he, as always he did earlier, greet me with his benevolence
i will not be angry that foreigners have been in residence at my straw hall
i promise to not let my swans and ducks bother my neighbors as in the past

i believe the impression you left me with on earlier visits
will still exist when you again visit my old straw hut
oh how wonderful to have a second shan-jian come visit
to restore the vigor and shine to my old house

murphy distraught at having woken the old couple living one floor below
4/11/2008 10:37 AM

von zach X,75

on the way to my straw hut at cheng-du-fu i pen these verses, and send them on before my arrival, to yan wu duke of zheng-guo (3 of 5)

i expect shivering cold bamboo by the hua river
and light-green sands shining through the clear waters
the orange trees will show a bewildering fullness of thorns
while the tips of their red trailing tendrils hang everywhere

as they fill in with their summer thickness
they will certainly impede any attempts at movement
when i am coming back then i will definitely choose
not to attempt home through the thicket to the west

my book covers and small medicine bags
will be covered with these small spidery webs
and only a few travellers will have visited the wine inn
or the small mountain bridge since i was here last

should you visit my overgrown court
in the time of the spring grasses
we must start our drinking early
to end up saturated as sponges

murphy kicking off his moccasins and glad to be home
4/11/2008 1:55 PM

von zach X,76