

two poems about my grief on the birthday of the tang emperor ming-huang (1 of 2)

since the feast of a thousand autumns is no longer held
i am saddened every year when the eighth month begins
the former emperor xuan-zong always had a big banquet on this date
the great drama of that celebration is no longer seen

once this birthday was one of the highest days marked on the calendar
now the dragon pool in the forbidden city sits quiet with past memories
i weep this day on the banks of the xiang river with fresh tears
looking into the distance toward the gardens of the yi-chin palaces

once all the officials received wonderful metal mirrors on this birthday
but now even the palace guard has scattered throughout the world
no longer is wine distributed early for the delectation of the people
the memories of this white haired old man bring only sadness

murphy remembering the sherry sipping at the meetings of the freshman council
8/11/2009 9:31 AM

von zach XX,1

two poems about my grief on the birthday of the tang emperor ming-huang (2 of 2)

the open air before the palace was an enormous space touching the clouds
colorful flags were raised high on the lances to play in the winds
the music seemed to emanate from the instruments of the immortals
a ceremonial gift of peaches from the royal gardens was presented to the emperor

i remember tightrope dancers dressed in lotus red gauze stockings
snowy white dancing horses with golden bridles making their appearance
on the steps of the palace other horses came bearing wine for the festivities
the tightrope dancers vaulted over each other without a single misstep

surely all this luxury of expenditure at that time was excessive
perhaps even leading to the current difficulties of our border defenses
i am on the banks of the gui river which flows from here all the way to chang-an
i follow the waves with my eyes knowing they will be able to return home

murphy bedridden and hallucinatory
8/11/2009 9:48 AM

von zach XX,2

the former censor su-huan visits

su-huan (head of his clan) is a former censor. he is a man who loves the solitary life and lives near the xiang river and has no contact with local officials. he has isolated himself from normal human affairs for a long time now. once he came to visit me on my boat, arriving suddenly in his sedan chair. his visit was not long and i invited him aboard to drink tea and wine while he shared his latest poetry with me. he was sympathetic to my wishes and said he had many to share. his art of poetry was always significant and his verses affected all who heard them. we stayed together until the next morning. after he left me i remembered the thundering fullness of his thought. it was as if he were still there alongside my book suitcase, easy chair, and walking stick. the sound of his eloquence remained alive. i sealed the next poem in seven rhymes in which i spoke of his extraordinary visit. one can gather how much i appreciate the poetry of su-huan.

pang-de-gong was famous for never leaving his mountain retreat
the former censor su-huan today shares the same characteristic
i have just heard him recite for me his new poems
they far exceed the artistry of the poets of the huang-chu period

although the dynasties have so often changed since then
he is easily the equal of the masters huang-xiong and si-ma-xiang-ru
as i looked into the mirror this morning my face was rejuvenated
it was if i were young again back in the gan-quan palace

i was so happy my hair seemed to have regained its old color
that under the scraggly white strands vigorous new growth had begun
last night when the lights were finally going out we heard crying
as if the two daughters of emperor shun were again outside the bamboo curtain

at least two hundred goblins were captivated by the beauty of the poems
they stayed to listen as the waves alongside quieted themselves so as to hear

murphy as always moved by the miracle of well wrought artistry
8/12/2009 10:01 AM

von zach XX,3

what one must deplore

the sky cloud now assumes the shape of a white robe
soon enough it becomes a shaggy white dog
the past and the present share endless changes
and many strange things occur to a man throughout his life

i recently heard that a woman named liu from he-dong
rejected her husband as if he were a thorn in her eye
this man wang-ji-yo had come from feng-cheng
he was very serious in his studies of the classics

he chanted the countless examples of our best literature
in particular he appreciated the book of the piety of children
he was poor, old and lean, his family lived from the sale of wood
those who pitied his fallen position visited and gave him wine

governor li-mian from giang-si was a descendant of emperor gao-zu
he presented wang to his guests and held him in great distinction
i heard that for three long years wang-ji-yo never mentioned his wife
full of caution he kept his mouth shut with his secret

the governor must have known but trusted his friends fully
he felt that the fickle woman had shown her petty nastiness
it has never been easy to find a bright moon pearl without a flaw
wang's education flowed brightly up to the northern star

in today's critical times the emperor should rely on such wisdom
why did not wang and li-mian find a place as counselors to the emperor
recently the governor himself was suddenly posted to liang-zhou
people of giang-si compared his attentions to those of a father or mother

i have known wang for a long time and revere his being
he has the stature of a high mountain surrounded by lesser hills
if both these men had been advisers, heaven's wishes would have been more clear
they like da-yu would have overcome even the biggest task to better the earth

oh wang, the streams and lakes hinder you from speaking directly to the emperor
oh li, if you had been appointed as an official no better man could have been found
when you die your stars should be set in the firmament to shine forever
why should men such as you be unused and sink into oblivion

we other ordinary people can be expected to eat our fill and trot along a routine
however, we all recognize the strength and honor represented by you both

murphy a talking head on a television news program
8/20/2009 10:14 AM

von zach XX,4

respectfully dedicated to my old friend army secretary lu-ju, fifth of his clan

full of deference i recall that through my mother we are both from the family cui
though now that the court has called you to serve you tower high above me
you have been accepted at the center as a second sun-qu
the general of all the armies has found a talented and trusted friend

you have relied upon your talents to achieve great things
now your salaries and rewards tower above the clouds
i have become old and have little to offer as advice for officials
but you have seen fit to meet me in a most friendly way

all of chang sha are hopeful that you will succeed
row after row of ships wait here for the chance to ship rice
the good relations between chang sha and jiang ling are cooling
hardships abound, hearts of the people are singed when looms are empty

i am a stranger here and cannot begin to help you in these endeavors
i am like a cold trickling stream which cannot rise to the flood
brittle white hair straggles down over my neck collar
the silver seal of office hangs broken from my belt

yet i can still spend long nights with you sharing poetry
and with effort continue drinking wine until the early morning
though answering your poetry becomes quite difficult
your poems are like the lakes and mountains set in motion

an improvement of the current situation will not occur suddenly
this realization brings grief into our discussions despite the joys of poetry
we share the knowledge that the son of heaven means well
but the mendacity of officials brings misery to the people

do not report to the emperor that a deer is a horse
and be sure to staff yourself with capable honest aides
before we friends separate from each other a final time
let us empty our effervescent cups together again and again

i admit sadly that i am tired of hearing crickets chirp the passage of years
and am happy escaping the tiger's roar like the wren nesting on its branch
and though my desire to become a hermit has not become real
i am sure no one expects this old man to be called up again for service

murphy belaboring the obvious
9/1/2009 7:30 AM

von zach XX,5

the story of the sorrow of separation, offered to lord liu, auditor under minister liang chongyi, on the occasion of his departure

i am told that you have come south to acquire suitable horses
the army has need of countless new mounts for its use
especially is there a sore need in the head quarters at xiang yang
the general there has few at his disposal and therefore fears the rebels

he wishes to gather strong horses which can carry armored warriors
he wishes for excellent racers like those used in the imperial hunts
yet they are not found anymore since the uprisings in the northwest
there are no more sources for such distinguished animals

the true dragon horses are to be found only in chang an
and their descendants have gone astray in the southwest
if it were not for the overwhelming needs of preparing for war
why else would you have made such a difficult journey to here

the usual horses of this region are quite often thin and stringy
here the officials mostly ride slow donkeys instead of bad horses
but general liang chongyi is highly respected for his naturalness
the discipline in his army is strong and the people live in peace

he often distributes his entire salary among his warriors
his war chest is not saved for frivolous personal pursuits
in this way he repays the mercy of the emperor with his loyal heart
his energy will force both the western and northern barbarians to flee

now he wants to buy many horses to resist the strong enemy cavalry
he wishes to buy the horses necessary to expel the barbarians
lord liu was chosen for this task and sent forth with a mandate
compared to his talents the sea seems narrow and limited

i, an old man from du ling, moored my boat here in chang sha last fall
lying here ill i made your acquaintance at this post office
with effort i combed my white hair and visited you with a jug of wine
as well as a handful of chrysanthemums i picked on my way

throughout the nine provinces battles rage incessantly
we must part now at the chong yang festival soon after we have met
i hold back my tears as we drink our farewell wine
to keep hidden from you my deep inner grief

murphy now relegated to the condition of a mere spectator

9/1/2009 9:53 AM

von zach XX,6

a second song of farewell given to my young relative, the auditor liu, tenth of his clan

we both are members of the distinguished family shi wei
now we are together in the fall here on the banks of the xiang river
while i outweigh you with the accumulation of my years
where talents are concerned i feel your superiority

from your recent activities i see that you have accomplished much
your determination matches the sheen of the sabre of the king of wu
i can only rest these weary wings of an old man these days
but you continue to forge forward and do not fall behind

we belong to the same family and you have come here at this time
your friendship has eased my profound misery and grief
i will stay here by the post office on the banks of the xiang river
where i will await your return from your travels to the south

murphy thankful he was raised in an extended family atmosphere
9/1/2009 3:54 PM

von zach XX,7

boarding the boat to leave for han-yang

since spring i have lived in a hut by the river
it is fall now and this stranger must board his boat once again
i am reluctant to leave the vegetables still growing in my garden
but the wind is up and the spray of the waves beads on my clothes

throughout my long journey i have been unable to sustain a living
my good intentions are always thwarted by disease and old age
the battles against the barbarians still rage in central china
and here in these remote parts messages arrive only rarely

the wild geese still still migrate here in their season
but the crows are forever perching on the masts
let me now proceed from here to han-yang and xiang-yang
i will settle there and forget all my worldly ambitions

murphy settling up accounts in preparation
9/3/2009 9:32 AM

von zach XX,8

south of dong-ting lake i give this poem to imperial commissioner jing, tenth of his clan, as he leaves for guang-ling

we find ourselves white haired at this welcome reunion
but there is nothing one can do to halt the ravages of old age
after many years of separation we have met once again
and once again we are singing sad songs of farewell

our youthful joy in existence has long since passed us by
but our friendship has remained as constant as conifers in the cold
your bravery still reminds of the strength of a drawn sword
the purity of your soul cool like a jade mug filled with ice

because of the rioting i can do nothing more than wander aimlessly
yet you have tirelessly prepared for this extended conflict
i show my age and sickness while you are filled with energy
why do i think i could ever surpass you in dealing with this life

now in the clear air of late autumn the still green mountain sparkles
a sharp breeze raises choppy waves on the broad dong-ting
now you hurry to see your friends between the huai river and the sea
there you are sure to find useful employment and a high salary

murphy fading before the rheumy eyes of his mirror
9/3/2009 9:50 AM

von zach XX,9

in late fall i am honored with a private letter from prefect pei-qiu pf dao-zhou; immediately after
i show my joy in the following verse which i send to him as well as to the censor su-huan

as i linger in foreign parts i am honored with letters from my friends
in this last month i have received an entire bundle of them
mostly they offer concerns about the state of my health
their kindness unfortunately cannot help me in my weakened condition

and though i am old and toothless i have not lost all ambition
while my tongue still speaks i can still give voice to verse
today i have received a private letter from prefect of dao-zhou
it is long and impressive and i have read it already three times

holding it in my hand i am willing to give up pearls from the sea
his words in my heart a gift of precious stones from the kun-lun mountains
i would forego a thousand jugs of the famous tan-zhou wine for this letter
and let a thousand chrysanthemums wither on the shore of the xiang river

my sons and grandsons now help me rise from my sickbed in my excitement
i sit in bed at night reading it again surrounded by festive candles
i remember when you left as a young man to be a minor official in yong-jia
at that time your white face and red cheeks reminded me of flowers

at that time i expected you to rise swiftly to become a general or governor
thoroughbreds like zi-yan and lu-er race as the wind to the lead
yet now the dust of violent battles surrounds the throne of the tang dynasty
to remedy these calamities the times need men like you to rise

then the black hairy barbarians will be released from their leader's torment
the wantonness of the people will gradually subside without our further effort
now you have met with the emperor and been told of his intentions
i expect you to restore the rule of law with your sense of justice

your report to the throne was a model of exquisite planning
you like liu-yi answered all the ministers questions in a surprising manner
in the future your long and explicit discussions will be heeded
and your marvelous plans for the troops will enhance your strength

earlier you listened to music together here in chang-sha with a white haired old man
the sword dances brought back the carefree exuberance of youth
during the banquet we discussed the capabilities of su-chin
his great grandchild su-huan has talents comparable to his forefather

su-huan's house stands near the town gate by the temple of han prince ding
this old man from chu who always needs medicines lives near the fish market
su-huan comes in his sedan chair to see me on the north side of the market
he takes me to the southern suburb to drink wine and take a nap

numerous generals are tired of the fighting and wish to return to chang-an
i trust you will soon rise in position to an even higher official post
in times like these people without salary fatten as birds at harvest time
while useful noble men withdraw like dragons to hibernate in the rivers

it is a sad madness that no trumpet or drum signals the end of this fighting
every day there are wholesale deaths on the field, entire divisions of men
i send these verses to prefect pei of dao-zhu and to censor su-huan
i am ashamed that i have been helped so much in this life and i can help others no longer

i leave these terrible tasks to the emperor and to his able assistant pei
who takes a most important post in state service and sacrifices his life for the emperor

murphy still meddling in the hurly burly of politics
9/6/2009 11:58 AM

von zach XX,10

respectfully dedicated to my old friend judge li-xun

my elderly friend is a man of exceptional abilities
he is a descendant of emperor gao-zu of the tang dynasty
he is a coral too precious to be offered for sale
or a magnificent horse that only the emperor could possess

even as a very young man he showed his lofty character
he has always shown a constant focussed energy like the north star
he is a fount of sincere plans within officialdom
he is always sincere in projecting his integrity

recently he has attempted to streamline official procedures
everyone has praise for what he hopes to accomplish
in this time of rioting he has concentrated on helping the people
and be assured i would not praise him if he were incompetent

what is more he has always examined things most thoroughly
and after deep thought has made the larger issues become clear
when he led discussions his listeners were moved to applause
when he made decisions the efficacy showed his experience

he has accumulated an extended portfolio of imperial exhortations
though his passionate zeal sometimes exceeded the protocols of the palace
he entered into headquarters but could not use his fullest abilities
if he were to be made a minister who might he be compared to

as an intimate friend he has kept up with my many wanderings
in his overflowing humanity he pities my senile decay
i know only too well how i have become too much a southerner
i wish fervently to return again to live out my life in the north

now i am merely a dying fish gasping in a cart's furrow
or a faithful dog who has lost his longtime master
now in the autumn the rocks of dong-ting lake are again exposed
the leaves of the willow have blown down across the meadows

my inspiration is influenced by the sad autumnal scenery
i wish only that you share my warm compassion for an old friend

murphy ever the man of letters
9/8/2009 10:17 AM

von zach XX,11

in late autumn censor cai, fifth of his clan, gives a farewell banquet to army secretary yin, sixth of his clan, who leaves to return to feng-zhou to visit his parents

i am filled with joy to make the acquaintance of such a competent scholar
one who thinks of his merciful mother while he is on his far travels
i share the pleasure of this long carousal as a guest at your farewell
i wonder if i might ask you to be a postman for me and carry a few letters

at evening when dark clouds gather birds fly home to their nests
while shivering cicadas manage to sing in the still green trees
in the winter there is no snow which falls in ho-nan
so i will remain here in stolid acceptance of my fate

murphy still knocking back his share of the bubbly
9/8/2009 10:29 AM

von zach XX,12

i take leave of zhang-jian-feng, 13th of his clan, the former secretary of the army for wei-zhi-jin
of hu-nan

i read once the story of the first beginnings of the tang dynasty
when liu-wen-jing and pei-ji first colluded, dragon emperor gao-zu hesitated
then li-shi-min gao's son led the suppression of the riots of war
fen-jin was where it all started to end in the full eradication of the cruel sui

new deserving ministers were appointed while the old regime was forgotten
old valiant officials such as liu-wen-jing were not given new powers
you are related to him on your mother's side and have the same talents
unfortunately, i have seen many young people these days who have little honor

i first met you in your post here at chang-sha and asked about your father
for you are the son of an old dear friend who was close to me when we were boys
i wipe tears from my eyes when i see your resemblance to him
you are descended from greatness on both sides and your youthful energy is needed

you can be a true friend and treat my son as your son after my death rites
you are needed here now but you increasingly will wish to return to the homeland
though as always you must be prepared for those who will speak ill of you
the rebels' activities worry the emperor and his troops need new leadership

emperors and dignitaries have their duties, so also needed are strong young men
even in the ravages of winter i see the sturdy cedars still stand green and strong
your sense of duty will lead in the end to your portrait being placed in the cloud gallery
were you able to fly as an immortal to the eastern sea you would still elect to serve the state

murphy arousing the young bloods to action
9/9/2009 8:26 AM

von zach XX,13

i escort my younger cousin censor lu, 14th of his clan, when he leaves for chang-an with the
corpse of president wei-zhi-jin

the coffin with the white mourning cloth crosses the river to dwindle in the distance
the red flags with the official title of the honored dead fade from the opposite shore
the horses pulling the hearse whinny in their sorrow and look back at their sad load
countless people cannot hold back the tears flooding from their eyes

and after wei's subordinates say goodbye to their leader's mortal remains
who will escort him through the gate screen of his house in chang-an
it is censor lu who followed him faithfully when he was still alive
he is a man who has expressed his talents through many long years of service

on the long way it will be he who holds in his hand the rope pulling the hearse
his heart filled with the loyalty he has always displayed with his service
his feeling of gratitude to his superior is deep and sincere
he remembers and does not fail in this last honorable duty for him

the funeral will wait until the emperor has issued his rearing dragon decree
while the courtyard of the censor awaits lu's return in his official censor's cap
lu displays his loyalty as a model of a good official, always ready to serve
he knows how to speak in a modest voice discussing the affairs of state

the barbarians of the north took advantage of the rebellion against the empire
and scattered their dust all over the palaces of the imperial city
i hear the insurgent governors still appear at the emperor's court
the eradication of the rebels has not been completely carried out

you should remind the emperor to be sure and timely in his efforts
and that he should be mindful of expenses to spare the people hardship
you must also ask the entrenched ministers if they will tolerate further rioting
whether they are concerned that chang-an might be besieged again

the entirety of the common people suffers the dreadful misery of war
while the cronies of an-lu-shan and shi-si-ming grow ever richer
i trust you will point out mistakes which are made over and over again
and when your advice leads to a better time honors will fall upon you

frugality was the guiding principle of the leaders of antiquity
this effective strategy has been emulated since earliest times
i hope your reminders to the emperor prove to be of benefit
i hope that your career is successful and that i should regain my health

now i am relegated to writing my grief signs in the air like yin-hao
i limp up into the mountains as old and ill i go picking ferns
after you leave i have no one to drink with even if i provide the mug
i will have no one to spend the night with after friendly conversations

with eyes full of diappointment i watch your bannered vehicles
i lean on my son while standing on the hinge rock til after you are gone
now begins the pure frost time of autumn on dong-ting lake
beginning the winter of bare limbed trees exacerbates my grief

murphy hobbling along as best he can

9/10/2009 8:23 AM

von zach XX,14

sick and suffering on my boat i lie in bed and write these thirty six rhymes to send to relatives
and friends in hu-nan

emperor huang-di long ago created harmony with his bamboo pipes
emperor shu of yue long ago played his string songs of the south winds
because of their death these rulers no longer bring a temperate breeze
now disharmonious winds have made me sick and feverish

we no longer have the sublime life available to the people in those famous early times
my health has been deteriorating for a long time now as i have traveled
my boat has been long at anchor here in the eastern part of dong-ting lake
it is deep into the winter so i watch the southern constellation during the night

now i sadly think of home as did ma-rong when he heard flute tunes of home
i wish to bear my breast to the cold winds from home on top the tower walls as did wang-can
in the winter my longing grows stronger as i look ever north to chang-an
the days are filled with dark gloomy clouds and drive me deeper into despair

false mirages rise above the waters of the larger lakes of hu-nan
the mountains rise above adorned in their finery of maple trees
in the winter here we are often oppressed by hot miasmatic vapors
and a perpetual rain trickles from the sky to wet our collars

and now it is the season of raging fevers which ritual drums do not help
nor does shooting the birds which resemble the owls of misfortune
only when i can begin to make myself one with my surroundings
only then can i ward off my low spirits of anxious depression

in truth the daily difficulty of living begins now to crush me
especially as the cold winter looms with its special problems
but due to my ongoing disease i am held back here helpless
this despite an official cap fastened on my head with a hairpin

earlier in my life i reminded the emperor too forcefully of his duties
this led to my fall from the official tower of high office
like a fool i wandered from here to there without purpose
relatives and friends helped me in my need despite my reduced status

i have become content with thin vegetable soup without rice
a hermitage would fit me better than a new high position
my chair of black leather has been repaired again and again
and my clothes are nothing more than a collection of patches

but my grief lies mainly in concerns for my country's misfortunes
shame comes from my writing being unable to subdue the barbarians
ten long summers i walked the grassy linen of si-chuan
now i have heard the beat of washing stones three autumns in hu-nan

earlier i feasted in the hall of brocade curtains with ministerial officials
now i sing alone the song of the old whitehead good for nothing
to return to the old days and their wholesome simplicity is impossible
but if one can forget the world it is easy to disappear into the people

i eat no more than the little wren since food is hard to come by
and i accept only a little money commensurate with my small needs
i do, however, think forlornly of the homeland's abandoned spring grass
and i have yet to find a peach blossom valley to make my home

i am filled with anxiety as i tumble like thistle-down on my way
and right after taking my medicines i am wracked with facial pains
i have had to bury a child in a lonesome roadside grave
and i can walk only feebly with the help of my ever-present cane

i have truly stumbled through a tormented, unsuccessful life
and i am most grateful to you for the help you have extended to me
that in spite of my failures you have seen fit to praise my poetry
and have likened me to the firm handle of a great man's sword

you have taken me up affectionately as the sea welcomes a small river
and likened me to the steps cut in the mountain leading ever higher
the headquarters in chang-sha where you are now active is sunlit
by the river there it is surrounded by spruce and bamboo

you fulfill your duties with an open and happy countenance
you work diligently to advance your office and better yourself
your wisdom even has the capacity to accept my naive directness
the sky which brightens this world knows the truth of my words

now the rebels once again fortify their positions in the mountains
and while the emperor wages war people lead a troubled existence
though the distance is far letters are now reaching us from the homeland
the fights rage on deeply inside the center of the empire in the north

the water here in the wells is bad so far from our native country
the traveller must take care and pay attention to the habits of the locals
yet even here one knows the blood of the fighting flows as before
and the noise and clamor of battle rages incessantly, on and on

ge-hung was said to arise alive from his still corpse
xu-jing managed to provide for his family even while in exile
xu had mastered economics, ge the secrets of the elixir of life
i have done neither, and suffer sickness, streaming tears

murphy giving in to his feelings of inadequacy
9/15/2009 8:23 AM

von zach XX,15

in my boat during a snowfall at night i remember my younger cousin censor lu, 14th of his clan

the north wind tears through the night on the gui river
a powerful snowstorm makes chaos past the candle's glow
the moon has risen but is unseen behind the southern tower
in this cold winter night clouds hang heavy over bei-zhu

i see a few feet into the flakes though the wind tears at the candle light
as the snow piles up on the roof sounds are muffled in my cabin
this snow makes it even more impossible to travel to see you
i will consider things again when the cock crows the morning

murphy snuggled deep in his security blanket
9/15/2009 8:42 AM

von zach XX,16

dealing with the snow

the snow comes from the north and invades chang-sha
clouds from the home of the tatars bring this cold and storm
fallen leaves tangle with the blowing wetness
the mixture of snow and rain brings no crystal beauty

my wallet is empty and life is becoming harder
but with my silver mug credit for wine is easy to obtain
yet here i sit with no one to drink with me
for company i shall wait til dusk and the crows return

murphy in the aching hell of winter
9/15/2009 8:53 AM

von zach XX,17

at winter's end i give this poem to army officer su-xi, 4th of his clan, as he leaves for kui-zhou

much like su-qin you are always traveling on the road
it is enough for you to become another minister of six empires
because of your abilities you have long been the guest of provincial governors
you are also a master of the classic five footed form of poetry

you, a decent man laboring long in obscurity, now have a position
as for me i am filled with sorrows due to my prolonged illness
now you need to wage a successful war as did lu-wan in the han dynasty
you must flush out the barbarian chief and soundly defeat him

as i look around me i see the first signs of spring are manifest
may you bring a new spring to the prestige of the emperor
i ask you to visit the temple of emperor shun-wu in my stead
to gaze out over the mountains of nine doubts and pour the sacred water

murphy achieving his devotion by proxy these days
9/15/2009 10:20 AM

von zach XX,18

a belated reply to a letter sent to me many years ago by the late governor gao-shi from si-chuan on the seventh day of the first month

poem: when i searched through my book suitcase today for forgotten writings, i found a poem sent to me during my stay at cheng-du-fu by the late gao-shi, at the time the governor of si-chuan. it was sent on the seventh day of the first month and as i read it tears fell, for i knew that ten years had passed since i received it, and six years since he died. old and ill i remember my old friend and one can imagine my melancholy thoughts. i am now left with only li-yu from han-zhong and prefect jing-chao-xian of zhao-zhou as my closest friends. today on the 21st day of the first month of the government period da-li i have written a belated reply to the poem of gao-shi, and send a copy to prince li-yu and my younger friend zhing-chao-xian.

i received a poem on the seventh day of the first month from governor gao-shi since then it disappeared from my sight despite its craft and beauty this morning as i searched through my papers i suddenly spied these verses when i looked at them i cried as if i had received them for the first time

how great was the fervent patriotism of this remarkable man his immense fame was deserved for his actions moved the world in the poem he expressed regret for this friend's sad position he also outlined his desire to remedy the miseries of the times

now the spring sunshine we shared shines on cheng-du-fu without us since his death a few years ago it is truly useless to us both i live in the land of the rivers xiao and xiang where turtles live and chang-an has not found another such eagle as he to soar in its sky

one may still call me, as he did, the traveller about the world and i am, but white headed i sit in a small boat alone in my sickness i hear only from a distance of the rioting in the imperial city i would like to send the whole eastern sea to flush out the bandits

the western turfan cross the borders again and again and many officials flee south as they once did during the jin dynasty i sit here and wish for the better times under xuan-zong or yao or even to find the palace of prince han-zhong to live there

the poems of the prince reminds one of the powerful rhythms of cao-zhi his remarkable ethics bring to mind those of the immortal liu-an while reading this poem longing for gao-shi overwhelms me maybe prefect jing-chao-xian will be able to write a suitable rhapsody for him

murphy catching up on old forgotten details of his life
9/16/2009 8:05 AM

von zach XX,19

i respectfully dedicate this poem to imperial commissioner xiao, 12th of his clan

at one time we served together at the headquarters of yan-wu
we both belonged to the suite of the governor of si-chuan
you were there first in those most difficult of times, i came later
eventually we both were separated from our exalted model yan-wu

you were later entrusted to write imperial decrees as i had done earlier
you became famous for your abilities, you influenced the highest dignitaries
the later you were sent for a short time as a district judge in a province
then you became again a chamberlain as famed as once xiao-wang-zhi

always you remained faithful to yan-wu as once ren-an was to wei-qing
when she died you honored his mother as once did the neighbor of meng-zi's mother
in both cases you led the solemn funeral cortege with dignity
you showed your devotion to his family both living and dead

you supported them as once zhang-lao supported the family of zhao-wu
in you yan-wu found as good a friend as xi-kang did in shan-bao
i myself received yan-wu's mercy and am ashamed i offered so little back
i am conflicted and filled with remorse that i can repay him no more

but my wishes fly unfulfilled out of the mystic mountain woods
you shine like a precious stone in the forefather temple of the dynasty
you can spread your feathered wings to reach your high ambitions
your phaeton is embossed with a bear and its wheels will carry you far

as for me i am unable to achieve such an official dignity
i am doomed to always remain as a discarded, useless man
we have long been friends and worked together in harmony
our amity always gleamed as gold and gems do when polished

i often think about how we used to go for walks together in cheng-du-fu
there on the shore of the jin river on the upper reaches of the yang-zi
our talk was filled with joy though our time together was short
when i think of those old times a flood of tears wets my handkerchief

i have long since been separated from the capital and officialdom
now i spend days and days on end sick and weak in my bed
i fervently desire to return again in my carriage before the palace gates
i am a wild goose on dong-ting lake wishing for spring to return north again

i suffer from the same thirsty illness as did si-ma-xiang-ru
i have been long in poverty and misery like yuan-xian
i ask you now for a quick gift of a pittance of rice
perhaps this small fish gasping in a muddy pond can begin a new life

murphy attending his fiftieth reunion to see who's still alive
9/16/2009 9:34 AM

von zach XX,20

i respectfully escort my maternal uncle archivist cui-wei, 23rd of his clan, as he leaves to be a temporary prefect at bin-zhou

worthy men seem always to come from outstanding families
my uncle is well known and respected throughout the empire
he is careful to maintain contact with a large number of famous men
his growing fame reflects down even to me, the son of his sister

but who would look for pearls and fine jewels in common mud
here i sit in my hut fringed with only a thin thorny hedge
old and decrepit i stare out at the world around me
constantly traveling i am weary from this war and unrest

now we separate during this fine spring weather on the shores of the yang-zi
i can not hold back the tears at this parting of our ways
i follow your ship with my spirit as it travels along its way
i note the call of a crow from the forest carrying food to its brood

many officials from the north have begun to travel to this region
you are going even further south, temporarily, to bin-zhou
certainly you will rise to the high dignity of your forefathers
for i am sure to hear that you have successfully suppressed the bandits

bin-zhou is a very cool place where the orange-well has pure water
its cool freshness is said to be able to alleviate suffering from disease
you now leave me to go the land of the southern barbarians
there you will display your knowledge and skills as an official

murphy watching the substitutes battle to win the game
9/17/2009 8:02 AM

von zach XX,21

i escort the judicial officer wei-si-zhi, 24th of his clan, as he leaves to audit examination
commissioner cui in ling-nan; at the same time i send this poem to prefect wei-tiao of shao-zhou

censor cui was appointed by the emperor as examination commissioner
and now you, oh wei, are leaving the xiang river in hu-nan to travel to him
cui was given this duty because of his acknowledged great talents
and now you go to him to help him fulfill his responsibilities

i know that your reputation is known far and wide
and that your noble character cannot be bribed
you will determine the situation and report with clarity
your conclusions will be accepted and universally respected

beyond the area around dong-ting lake i have only a few old friends
they all now dwell in the eternal spring of ling-nan
i ask you to visit prefect wei-tiao from shao-zhou for me
i wish to thank him for the recent poetry he sent my way

murphy careful to reciprocate favors
9/17/2009 8:27 AM

von zach XX,22

i escort district judge zhao, 17th of his clan, as he leaves for his district

you are like the jewel of bien-he in the possession of king hui of zhao
when several cities are combined into one district a difficult judgeship is formed
mountain pheasants will meet your ship as they once did for lu-gong in zhong-mou
you will manage your district well and plant many peach trees for your people

i regret deeply that i did not become your friend sooner to share time with you
and what is more the illness i have has kept me from visiting you as i would have wished
your kindness and generosity extends even to the elderly here in the south
and part of this charm you share with others you shared with this old man

murphy writing thank you cards after his birthday party
9/17/2009 8:39 AM

von zach XX,23

simultaneously with dou-lu-feng, i write a verse with the rhyme zhi, which i then give to li-pei,
son of li-xian

your father is like ou-ye-zi who fashioned a magnificent sword from six metals
you are like a colt of the da-wan empire whose sweat glistens like gems
your physical beauty is so great that it will never find an equal
your wisdom is such that you will succeed in whatever you wish to do

you dream of an orchid and a prince's life, and it is given to you
i confidently predict you will excel over others when you take the exams
you had already mastered the classics at a very young age
now you will progress even further achieving a final brilliance

this son becomes a gem tree such as stands in the courtyard of xie-an
and we are gathered here now like the pan-yo ministerial officials
simultaneously with dou-lu-feng i sing these verses for the phoenix boy
i who am merely an old farmer wishing to retire to a life in the mountains

murphy able to scribble with the best of them
9/18/2009 7:58 AM

von zach XX,24

the wild geese return north (1 of 2)

last autumn ten thousand wild geese returned here to hu-nan
now they will all fly back to their homes in the north
in pairs they look at me, the old traveller, and then rise
overhead they flock together leaving me behind

up in the clouds they noisily call to each other
only a few are left and they will leave tomorrow
i want to tie a letter to the foot of a wild goose as in the legends
i sit here in sorrow wishing i could pick wild ferns in the mountains

murphy watching his children leave him for their future
9/18/2009 8:08 AM

von zach XX,25

the wild geese return north (2 of 2)

before the first snow they leave the land of the barbarians to fly here
when the first flowers come they rise to the clouds and return
now their shadows are seen on the waters of the pure wei river
as they mass above dong-ting lake to head north

in the northern regions beyond the great wall, the cold spring leaves
here in the south of the yang-zi the summer will be burning hot
a hunter's arrow just misses a goose flying overhead
the frightened cacaphony of the flock is terrible to hear

murphy attending to the heightened chance of tragedy accompanying any change
9/18/2009 8:17 AM

von zach XX,26

in the boat on the second day of the cold food festival

for this festival today i force myself to drink wine
i nibble at the cold food i am still eating
abandoned and lonely i sit in my usual chair
an old hermit's cap graces my quiet sorrow

despite my complaints about the high spring waters
the boat sails as if flying through the sky
to my aged vision the flowers on the bank are but a blur
my eyes conjure up a fog which isn't there

elegant butterflies flutter here and about
some land on the open curtains of my cabin
light winged gulls are alongside in the water
one after another they float by on the rapid current

i look behind the white clouds into the distance
even from far away dark mountains project their presence
i conjure a vision in my mind filled with grief
i imagine the capital city of chang-an to the north

murphy losing it in his dotage
9/18/2009 10:01 AM

von zach XX,27

i seal these verses as swallows fly by the boat

now it is my second spring as a guest here in hunan
for a second time the swallows return carrying their mud
in the garden of my old home they knew me as a friend
now on the first day of the second month they see me again

how touching it is that they build their nests everywhere
there is no difference between us making our homes here then there
they twitter away on the masts of my boat for a while
my sleeves become wet with emotional tears as i watch

murphy with deep emotions boiling to the surface
9/18/2009 10:19 AM

von zach XX,28

the feast of souls

a profusion of flowers wherever you look in honor of this day
the thousands of people of chang-sha enjoy themselves
green willows by the ferry, their leaves like arched eyebrows
magnificent horses dance in the street competing for attention

today is a day for the local people to visit the buddhist temple
the troops of several generals camped nearby for the festivities
a second ma-yuan is set to strike out against the rebels
his second in command, another fierce warrior, also enjoys the feast

they arrive back from the monasteries in the mountains as the sun sets
they take the festooned ship to the bawdy houses along the shore of the xiang
no one knows why since ancient times insurgencies do not stop
but it is easy to understand taking pleasure to forget one's troubles

although my brothers and sisters are still alive i get no letters
the rioting continues and i suffer from our painful separation
i have chosen not to accompany the young people on their excursions
i content myself with a purification ceremony this third day of the third month

murphy celebrating on the sidelines
9/19/2009 8:05 AM

von zach XX,29

dedicated to wei, adviser of the crown prince, seventh of his clan

among the officials coming from our region are many worthy men
the villages du-ling and wei-qu near the wei-yang palace are justly famous
for generations your family has produced outstanding ministers
it is said the distance from our village to the palace is a step and a half

you hurry now to the pass through shen-si in rain and snow
i wander in the south through flowers in mist covered meadows
in the spring beauty of dong-ting lake i deplore your departure
afterwards i float among water plants and forget about home

murphy wrestling with his memories
9/19/2009 8:23 AM

von zach XX,30

while watching flowers fall into the water i write a verse poem in a new style

effusive peach blossoms are around the hut on the bank of the xiang
in the cool of spring a fine rain yields slowly to the rising sun
the wind is jealous of the red blossoms and shakes them loose
the waters have a secret attraction and eventually hold the falling petals

the flowers in the water float past the slowly rowed boat
they fear both the wrenching wind and the splendor of the waves
they hate even more to fall upon the breast of this onlooker
they apparently wish to keep their purity and remain where they were

leisurely they flit around in the humid air at different heights
lighter than feathers they coat the sand and grass, and finally the water
bees and butterflies are attracted but do not dare settle on them
a dragonfly looks askance, then flees before the shrike

murphy in the moment and loving it
9/19/2009 10:23 AM

von zach XX,31

the tale of yo-lu-shan and dao-lin monasteries

south of yu-quan lies the unusually beautiful yo-lu-shan monastery
its rich curvatures compete with those of the dao-lin monastery
their gates open wide high above the wilderness around dong-ting lake
the foundation of dao-lin stretches down to the red sand lake

here, even in summer, a cool wind blows on the bones of buddha
day and night one hears music and smells burning incense
in this area stretch wide swards of evergreen tibetan grass
the priests who preside here are as precious as pearls from the sea

the stupas and temple walls compete with each other in beauty
the fragrant kitchen and the path through the spruces delightfully cool
the songs of the birds emanate from within the lotus blossoms
the gilded entranceways gleam in the bright sunlight

one might never be able to find the immortals in the eastern sea
or be assured of reaching the edenic heavens of the far west
hence, at my advanced age, i am delighted to be standing here
moreover, the warmth of late spring has invigorated me

where else could an old white head like me travel to
where else but near here should he choose to build his hut
a life akin to that of peach blossom spring can be had
and the earth here at orange sandbar is especially fertile

the customs of the people of chang-sha are conservative and moral
in the courtroom of the yamen quiet order and dignity prevail
in ancient times of disorder one withdrew into loneliness
now i have found a paradise where my small self can find refuge

it is not too late for me, i must stay here with these priests
why should i still yearn for gaining prestige and wealth
i have lived with pleasure in the wilderness with my poetry
here i can study buddhism further midst stimulating companions

i can absorb the beauty of the landscape at my leisure
every bird and flower will not escape my friendly gaze
in his exile song-zhi-wen wrote a poem on the wall
i am appreciative of the chance to add my small voice to his

murphy happily building his latest nest
9/20/2009 10:35 AM

von zach XX,32

respectfully i answer a poem sent to me by censor kou-xi

once before we parted in your hometown of xun-xia
a full forty years have passed since that time
recently you traveled here as censor at the emperor's behest
yet you found time to visit with me on the banks of dong-ting lake

you mentioned in your poem the pain of our first separation
and that when we parted it was in the beautiful spring time
my thoughts accompany you on your investigative trip south
i sit here in my yellow hat eagerly awaiting your return

murphy writing his thank you notes as his mother asked
9/21/2009 7:56 AM

von zach XX,33

the grey horse

a grey horse rides in from the northeast
two arrows are stuck in its empty saddle
what calamity has befallen its rider
he is no longer here to tell his story

after his general was murdered in the night
he must have been killed in the fighting
in times of rebellion there are differing deaths
at the sight of each my tears begin again

murphy benumbed by the steadiness of casualties in afghanistan
9/21/2009 8:03 AM

von zach XX,34

entering heng-zhou

since ancient times dynasties have suffered rebellions
whether one will prevail or collapse depends on the ruler
the tang dynasty has been blessed with a brilliant court
so why did the tatars follow an-lu-shan in his recklessness

when old general go-shu-han lost tung-guan pass
all the quiet borders erupted into roiling riotous flames
the ruler and ministers fled in humiliation and disgrace
neither rivers or mountains held back the invading forces

important provinces are now governed independently by warlords
who ignore the central government, flouting the laws
the armies and the government are now at odds
the commanders in the field have usurped authority

i lament the failure of governor cui-guan and his unselfish principles
he refused to compromise his austere vision and failed
though he tried to govern the province as he did his own household
and he always tried to mitigate the suffering of the people

he had spent his entire life bringing succor to the needy
while preserving the rectitude of customs and habits
he was not gifted nor interested in military affairs
for he spent his time dealing with bread and butter economics

this he believed to be the most important aspect of his office
and his penchant for frugality he visited upon others
he cut back provisions for the armies, both wine and food
and provided them with only thin clothes for the bitter winters

this ripe ground was exploited by the unscrupulous cang-jie
mixing lies and truths he led a seditious conspiracy into open conflict
in the end cui-guan was murdered in his own tent
the entire province of hu-nan was plunged into misery

fierce fighting broke out at midnight at headquarters
an immense black smoke rose to blot out the stars
the grain and silk stored in warehouses were taken by the rebels
a murderous spree spread all along the rivers yuan and xiang

the idea that virtue is to be rewarded was completely forgotten
if one looked to heaven for relief none was forthcoming
in highest dismay i fled the flying arrows enveloping chang-sha
step by careful step we threaded our way through the rioting

we made our way painfully through thorns and briars
my feet were torn and blistered, my legs swollen and sore
my son who had just returned from a distant trip followed me
his wife, mother of a small girl still at her breast, was at my side

i who have been too long in foreign parts am happy to escape
but i am ashamed that i have grown too old to fight the barbarians
we proceed slowly and sadly by land and by water
it matters not whether we hide among fishermen or merchants

my body is too old to repay the emperor's beneficent mercy
with my ongoing illness i am unable to travel to the court
hopelessly i share the life and philosophy of the common man
it is my pride which gnaws at my breast for my inability to help

on the water i flee hurriedly from island and riverbanks
on the land i slowly push my way through the thick woods
finally we moor my boat on the left shore of the chen river
we have arrived at the bustling city of heng-zhou

birds and clouds circle around the triumphal arches
the famous gardens are fresh with the scent of grass and flowers
the flagstaff in the market towers above the town houses
watch towers seem to glare down from the city's walls

prefect yang-ji carries himself with the dignity of those in antiquity
his excellent talents surpass the other officials of the court
as governor he will make himself a strong pillar supporting the state
while censor he demonstrated a majestic dignity of office

yesterday i attended a banquet held in his honor and was impressed
his wit and charm poured from his person like the finest of wines
i should also mention he has invited me to rejoin him for other festivities
his calm hospitality has gone far toward relieving my anxieties

also he is respected far and wide as an expert in military matters
not to mention his prowess as a literary talent of the first order
he has in his headquarters the courageous assistant su-huan
who is known to be as brave and daring as any living soldier

should a punitive expedition be sent out from heng-zhou
victory would be a certainty and a telling blow upholding the state
the rebels would be swept away as dust before a broom
how could pesky mosquitoes escape the wrath of such might

chen-zhou is justly famous as the site of the famous orange well
the mountain of the immortal draws me to proceed there
on the journey to heng-zhou i suffered greatly from the heat
i look forward to the comfortable cool breezes of chen-zhou

also i have an uncle there who is serving as prefect
i recently received several wonderful letters from him
in them all he has repeated his warm invitation to visit
his letters consist of hundreds of lines of beautiful calligraphy

i will be like jiang-zong brought up by his maternal grandparents
and will emulate xie-an who gave himself over to the enjoyment of nature
but i am an ordinary man and shouldn't compare myself to men such as these
i am a but small bird seeking shelter entering the phoenix forest

let me be a dedicated student of a high minded scholar
let me find a proper place in my uncle's entourage
to live in that paradise behind the twisted thorn gate of chen-zhou
and watch my uncle rise as a roc on the wind ever higher and higher

murphy imagining safe harbor from all his troubles
9/22/2009 8:25 AM

von zach XX,35

on the boat i suffer in the heat while writing this verse about my feelings. i send it respectfully to governor yang-ji and ask him to share it with the officials in the department of censors

at the time i was a traveller in and around the province of hu-nan
i was an unfortunate witness to the rebellion of troops under cang-jie
in the middle of the night i mingled with the general population
and was able to escape from the turmoil and save my life

cui-guan had always shown a loyal heart and concern for the people
but he was unexpectedly murdered in his headquarters by cang-jie
oh, would there have been someone there at the time of the deed
who could have confronted the murderers and expelled them

i confess that at that time i did not show the valor of a hero
and i will bear the shame of my passivity to the end of my life
i pleaded the fact of my rheumatism as a pretext for my inaction
but how could it have been otherwise that i could now be in heng-zhou

although it is extremely hot and uncomfortable on the boat
i can still bathe and wash away all the sweat and the grime
i lament the deaths of all those who died along the way
left behind on the side of the road to rot and decay

now governor yang-ji has been appointed general of all the armies
hopefully he will take control of the situation and suppress the insurrection
his duty before all else is to capture and punish the evildoers
for indeed, his official district covers over half of hu-nan

because he and his officers are organized and understand this
they must press forward and open the way to chang-sha
i have heard that also governor pei-qiu of the upper xiang river
has begun a slow approach to retake the capital there

if they will be able to fulfill their neighborly dutie to us
we shall both destroy the rebels uner the mandate of heaven
now yang-ji proposes to end the rebellion here in the south
while chang-an to the north is and will be protected

then his fame will be assured and gleam in the histories
how his perfected strategies will be extolled by all
all the governors agree, pei-qiu, li-mian, yang-zi-lin
to marshall their collective energies and crush the rebels

their call to loyalty will be heeded by the common people
and how my enthusiasm is stimulated, this weak, old man
the subaltern officers of yang-zi-lin has petitioned for amnesty
which he asserts will be of the most benefit of the people

but who would change the original plans to crush cang-jie
when i consider abandoning this effort i am overcome with grief
but the marvelous member of the imperial family, censor li-mian
is a man of shining devotion and fights tenaciously against cang-jie

he plans his strategy appropriately against the rebels
how could they ever hope to hold out against such a man
yet, despite of the mighty strength of the dynasty
the rebels seem not to be intimidated in the least

hence these bandits must be thoroughly, ruthlessly, eradicated
and the legitimate throne rest upon the strength of the loyal governors
i write this poem to give voice to my anxious heart
i send it out to raise my voice to heaven how deep my grief

murphy reduced to a game of go instead of fighting a battle for real
9/23/2009 10:32 AM

von zach XX,36

watching the rain in the tower along the xiang river thinking of censor pei-qiu, 12th of his clan,
who is now on campaign against cang-jie

here in the southern regions there are high winds and powerful waves
it doesn't seem to matter whether the sky's are cloudy or clear
everywhere along the river fields the cheerful sun is shining
but lightening fills the slouds coming down from the mountains

here in the tower i am quite near the booming thunder
looking to the sky i can see the swirls of descending rain
the rain is coming from the lands far to the south
it must have washed and cooled the troops in the field

murphy dislocating his concerns
9/24/2009 7:50 AM

von zach XX,37

at the new school in the temple of confucius in heng-shan-xian i give these verses to district judge lu

a comet flashed over the emperor's palace presaging the coming of an-lu-shan
since then there has been no sacrifice in the forefather's temple in chang-an
the officers carrying themselves in heavy armor try to outdo each other
while the scholars are left in misery and forced to their own devices for survival

this has been the case now for the last ten years and has affected everyone
the funding for confucian schools is no more, scattered on the winds
the soldiers have found no time for rest and are continually fighting
the scholars have found their preparations for service are frustrated

as i have wandered about the area around dong-ting lake
i have discovered a school established by a second wang-wen
in attendance are many scholars likened to storm and rain
which will produce abundance in the fields of summer

when the tang dynasty rises anew they will be needed
their confucian apprenticeship will well serve the state
such excellent talents now rely upon district judge lu
who represents for everyone the idea of renewal

although the district heng-shan is small, its ambition is large
the confucian students are the wellspring of this aspiration
one sees it emanate from the heart of the school as an embodiment
it is the the song of restoration of the temple in the book of odes

the school is not of an earlier origin but newly built
the great confucian temple was restored and refurbished
this school has a capacity of at least one hundred students
the space within the four walls is wide and capacious

the worth of one hundred students is that of three thousand soldiers
they will be that effective at finally ending the rioting
in the courtyard there are many tall trees to be found
the thick trunks hold up umbrellas of dark green foliage

the winds pick up a coolness from the large well in the yard
one can sit on the steps in comfort even in the heat of summer
i hear the sound of recitation of the sacred writings
as i sit in peace the noise of the riots seems far, far away

i am still full of longing to return to my old native country
but when i am here my face loses its sorrowful expression
here in the south the storm has stopped and the waves are quiet again
and this school has begun to bring back the quietude of propriety

officials have in the past collected earlier poems to record the culture
yet they have yet to come to this remote area so i seize my brush
this loud song should be sent out into the whole world
i do not wish the importance of this effort to fall into oblivion

murphy working hard to establish indian schools in indian country
9/25/2009 9:17 AM

von zach XX,38

the song of the red phoenix

have you not seen the monumental mount heng in hu-nan
a red phoenix sends out its plaintive voice from its heights
it stretches its body to look far in the distance for its own kind
his wings droop, he closes his beak, his heart fills with sorrow

it regrets all the birds below caught in the hunter's nets
even the smallest sparrows cannot escape their webbing
it decides to share its food with all humble creatures, even the ants
and cares not whether the owls get angry and give a hoot

murphy telling cherokee animal stories for the kids
9/25/2009 9:32 AM

von zach XX,39

district judge nie of heng-zhou has sent me food and wine with a letter as i am isolated here
along this silent river. i express my pleasure with these verses and wished to take them
personally to the yamen offices of lei-yang, but the distance is too great and the waters too high
for me to make the journey, so i send it with the messengers who brought the meat and wine as
they return to lei-yang.

the district judge from lei-yan has sent me a letter
it finds me isolated here in a desolate river region
in olden times there was a famous brother and sister nie
you are a worthy descendant of these justly honored siblings

recently i met the grandson of state minister di-bo-ji
and he told me how much he admired you and your actions
you are from a family famous in the imperial academy of letters
but now you are stuck as the district judge in lei-yan

you showed yourself to me to be a true friend in my need
held back here i have seen nothing but severe flooding for five days
cang-jie has murdered his superior general cui-guan
four funeral flags are flying on the shores of dong-ting lake

on my trip in my lonesome boat my misery only intensified
my way through the wilderness has been filled with danger
often i was frightened when the gibbons suddenly scattered
how i envied the cranes and herons who flew off quickly

your presents for me are an honor and a true feast
your tasty wine especially has begun to ease my grief
i will not deign to tell you that cang-jie is a danger
but i feel strongly that he and all rebels should be ruthlessly crushed

while sailing along the quiet shores of chen-zhou
i had no inkling of the terrible news from chang-sha
the troops requested by censor cui might now be in chang-sha
and the soldiers from li-zhou are few but brave

these efforts at quelling the disturbance are real
they please me as i sit here in the river at the postal station

murphy still within the loop of the old boys' network
9/25/2009 10:07 AM

von zach XX,40

i escort li-xian, 11th of his clan, as he leaves chang-sha

i once was with you in tung-ku when we were refugees
now after twelve years we meet again on the shores of dong-ting lake
far from chang-an i feel i was unworthy of the gift of shoes by the emperor
i am in chang-sha and i am tired of singing of separation from home

you have been my friend for a long time and are a unique talent
i lost my position once in the past and am unlikely to rise again
yet unworthy as i am, li and du have been linked together by others
and even in my autumnal grief the shivering cloud-like chrysanthemums proliferate

murphy watching it all slowly fade into the distance
9/25/2009 10:26 AM

von zach XX,41

at the end of autumn i leave for shen-si and leave this poem of farewell to my relatives and friends in the hu-nan region

the waters have risen high in the streams of hu-nan
the bleak autumn skies reflect the hard times
how could i not complain in my desperate situation
i am old and exhausted of resources, my misery increases

in the headquarters of chang-sha are gathered many talents
your honest and diligent efforts are much needed
i would still like to return to the north despite the cold and snow
who of you would not have compassion for an old man in a torn sable cloak

murphy leaving them in tears
9/25/2009 10:37 AM

von zach XX,42

entering dong-ting lake

dragon caves surround dong-ting lake
past lung-dui island one sees the bo-sha station
ancient trees protect the flood dikes
nattering crows dance around my boat

my ship handles the waves easily under a south wind
and i wish to return quickly before nightfall
the gleam on the water surface stretches into the distance
would this were the raft of the immortals on its way to the heavens

murphy literally sailing into the sunset
9/25/2009 10:45 AM

von zach XX,43