

# K I Ề U

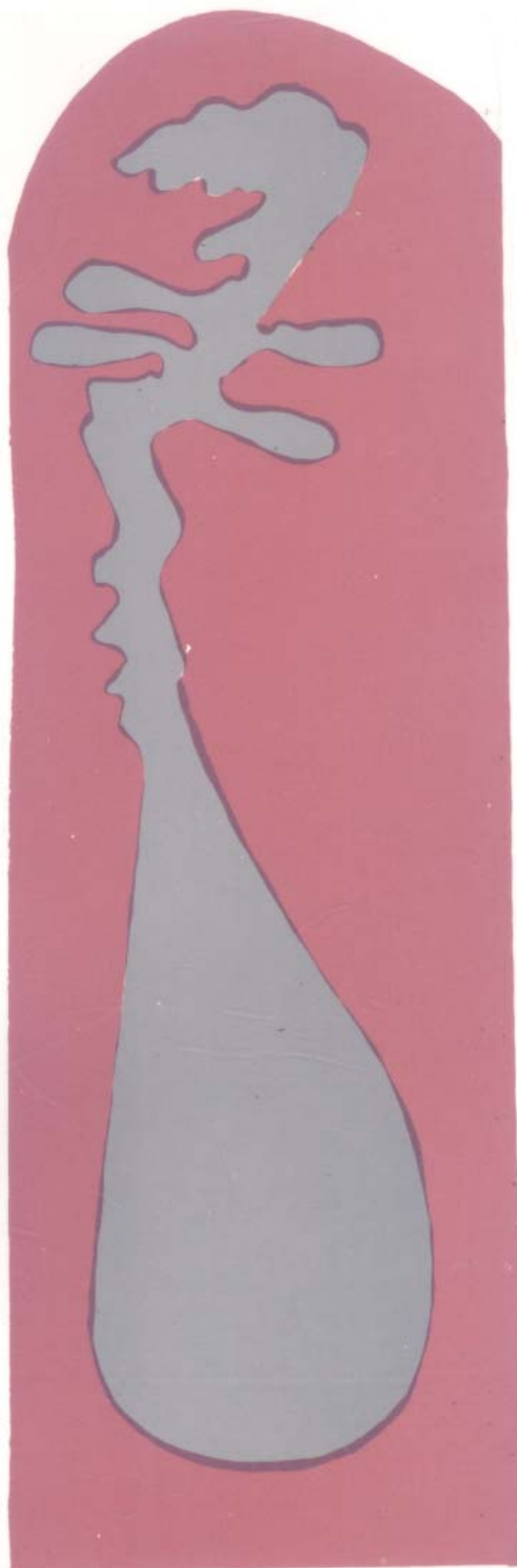
NGUYỄN DU



THE GIỚI

BILINGUAL

THẾ GIỚI PUBLISHERS - HANOI



**NGUYỄN DU**

# **KIỀU**

**VIETNAMESE – ENGLISH**

Set into English verse by

**MICHAEL COUNSELL**

**THẾ GIỚI Publishers  
Hanoi**

**NGUYỄN DU**

**KIỀU**  
**VIỆT – ANH**

Dịch sang tiếng Anh :  
**MICHAEL COUNSELL**

**NHÀ XUẤT BẢN THẾ GIỚI**  
**Hà Nội**

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Among the many misunderstandings of the Vietnamese people by the English-speaking world in the twentieth century, we must include the failure to understand that they are a nation of poets and heirs to a great culture.

Nguyen Du who lived in Vietnam from 1765 to 1820, wrote in the style of and with many quotations from Chinese classical literature, and based his greatest work on a story he had heard when leading an Embassy to Beijing, but he wrote in Vietnamese, and his fellow-countrymen are proud that this proves that they have an independent cultural life of their own. It is said that many a Vietnamese peasant following his water-buffalo in the paddy field can quote long passages of the epic of Kim, Van and Kieu.

My knowledge of the Vietnamese language is not fluent enough to call this a translation. I am dependent on the translations into French verse by René Crayssac (Hanoi 1926), into English prose by Le Xuan Tuy (Saigon second edition 1968) and into English blank verse by Huynh Sanh Thong (New York 1973). As far as I know, however, this is the first time it has been rendered into English verse in the same meter as the original and with the same rhyme scheme though the internal rhymes are only found in the prologue and epilogue.

The terrible sufferings of the heroine, Kieu, as she becomes the victim of one oppressor after another, could be paralleled in the life story of many Vietnamese women in this century. But it has also been seen by many as a parable of the suffering of the Vietnamese people under foreign interference, and I hope this version will make their character better known, so that their story, too, may have a happy ending.

*Michael Counsell*

*begun Saigon 1968;*

*revised and completed London 1994.*



## PLACE-NAMES

*These are given in the modern Pinyin transliteration of the Chinese name. This is followed by the older Wade-Giles transliteration, a guide to pronunciation, the Vietnamese form and the location.*

Beijing, Peking, bay jing, Bac-kinh; capital of China in the northeast, home of the Vuong family.

Chu: Tsou; choo; So; province now called Hubei (Hopei)

Fujian: Fukien; foo-jec-en; Phuc-kien; coastal province north of Guangdong

Fuzhou: Foochow; foo-joe; Phu-duong; capital city of Fujien province

Guangdong; Canton: gwang-dung, Viet-dong; southern province near Hong Kong.

Hangzhou: Hangchow; hang-joe; Thuong; port in Zhejiang (Chekiang)

Jin: Tsin; Djin; Tan; province now called Shanxi (Shansi)

Liaoyang: Liaoyang, lee-ow-yang; Lieu-duong, city in Liaoning (Manchuria)

Nanping : Nanping : nan-ping; Nam-binh; city in Fujien (Fukien)

Pu: Pu; poo; Boc; river in Shandong (Shantung).

Qian-tang: Chientang; chee-en-tang, Tien-duong : river in Zhejiang (Chekiang)

Shang-dong: Shantung; shan-dung; Tc; peninsular province south of Beijing (Peking).

Siang; siang; see-ang; Tuong; river in Henan (Hunan).

Taizhou: Taichow; tic-joe; Chau Thai; port on coast of Zhejiang (Chekiang).

Weixian: Weihsien; way-shee-en; Lam-Thanh; district in Shandong (Shantung)

Wu: Ou; woo; Ngo; region west of Jiangxi (Kiangsi)

Xi-xiang : Si-Chouang; shee-shee-ang; Giu-giang; temple in the play "The Romance of the Western Chamber".

Xinyang : Hsinyang; shin-yang; Tan-duong; city in Henan (Hunan) where the founder of the Tang dynasty was enthroned.

Wuxi: Wuhsi; woo-shee; Vo-tich; city in Zhejiang (Chekiang)

Yixian: Ihsien; yee-shee-en; Lam-Chuy; inland district in Shandong (Shantung).

Yue; Yueh; you-eh; Viet; province now called Guangdong (Canton)

Zhejiang; Chekiang; djeh-jee-ang; Tich-giang, coastal province north of Fujian (Fukien).

## PEOPLE

*Names referred to are followed by a very approximate pronunciation guide. Names of people in Chinese literature, history or legend are given in Pinyin, others are in the Vietnamese form.*

Bac-Ba, hack-ba; a brothel keeper

Bac-Hanh; Back-hann: Kieu's third husband, nephew to Bac-Ba

Chang Ching; Chang-ching : a Don Juan of Chinese story

Chung; chung: a secretary to the mandarin

Cui; tsoo-ee: Heroine of "The Romance of the Western Chamber"

Dam-tien; damm-tee-enn: a dead singer

Secretary Do; Doh: secretary to the mandarin in Weixian

Giac-Duyen; jack-dwee-en: Abbess of a Buddhist convent

Hang-Thuy; hang-twee: abbess known to Giac - Duyen

Hang-Chao; wang-chow: led a rebellion in 874-84, in the Tang period

Hoan-Thu; wann-ter: Thuc's first wife

Ho-Ton-Hien; Ho-ton-hee-enn: imperial envoy

Jia-Ching; djee-ah-ching: Emperor during the Ming dynasty 1522 - 1567 AD

Jang; djang: hero of "The Romance of the Western Chamber"

Jao-jun; jow-jun: emperor's concubine sent to the Tartar Khan

Jung-zu-Chi; djung-dzu-chee: connoisseur of lute playing

Khuyen; kwee-un: a servant of the Hoan family, his name means Hawk

Kim-Trong; Kim-chong: or Kim, a student for the mandarin, Kieu's fiancé

Kuan-Yin; kwan-yinn: Chinese goddess of mercy

Lai; lie a wise man of Chinese story

Lan-Ting; lann-ting: a famous calligrapher

Li-Ji; lee-djee : sold herself as a slave to save her parents under the Tang dynasty

Ma-Giam-Sinh; ma-jam-sinn: Kieu's first husband

Ma-Kieu; ma-kew: a prostitute

Nguyen Du; ngwee-en zoo: 1765-1820, Vietnamese poet and author

Pan; pan: Pan Chao was a famous female writer under the Han dynasty

So-Khanh; sir-kahn: Tu-Ba's accomplice

Song-Yu; song-yew: a Don Juan of Chinese story

Tam-Hop; tamm-herp : nun and prophetess

Thu; too: servant assigned to Kieu

Thuc-ky-Tam; took-key-tamm : or Thuc, Kieu's second husband

Thuy-Kieu; twee-kew: or Kieu (the name of our heroine should be pronounced in three elided syllables kee-e-oo : but kew is near enough for English-speakers), elder daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Vuong

Thuy-Van; twee-vann; or Van, younger daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Vuong

Ti-Ying; tee-ying : a daughter who successfully pleaded for her father to the emperor during the Han dynasty

Tu-Ba; too-ba : a brothel-keeper

Tu-Hai; ter-high : Kieu's fourth husband, a soldier

Ung; erng : a servant of the Hoan family, his name means "hound"

Vuong-Quan; vwung-kwann : son of Mr. and Mrs. Vuong

Xie; shee-eh: Xie-Tao-Yun was a famous authoress under the Chin dynasty

Mother Xieu; see-oo: a laundress who sheltered the future prime minister Han-Tin

Xuan; swann : servant assigned to Kieu

Ziao-Lian; zee-ow-lee-ann : widow who wrote verses about her late husband

*It's always been the same:  
good fortune seldom came the way  
of those endowed, they say,  
with genius and a dainty face.*

*What tragedies take place  
within each circling space of years!*

*"Rich in good looks" appears  
to mean poor luck and tears of woe;  
which may sound strange, I know,  
but is not really so, I swear,  
since Heaven everywhere  
seems jealous of the fair of face.*

*Trăm năm trong cõi người ta,  
Chữ tài chữ mệnh khéo là ghét nhau.  
Trải qua một cuộc bể dâu,  
Những điều trông thấy mà đau đớn lòng.  
Lạ gì bỉ sắc tư phong,  
Trời xanh quen thói má hồng đánh ghen.*

*Where bamboo covers case  
old manuscripts of countless price  
preserved in fragrant spice,  
sit by a lamp and study well  
the story that they tell;  
how in the dynasty of Ming  
when Jia-ching was the king  
and all hts empire was at rest,  
among those who were blessed  
with learning was a man named Vuong.  
He had a son, the young  
Vuong-Quan, to carry on his name  
and literary fame;  
and two girls, Thuy-Van and Thuy-Kieu,  
who were as slim as two  
young poplar-trees, as pure as snow,  
as fair as heaven, though  
quite different in their perfect grace.  
Van's moon-like round clear face  
her honest simple heart displayed;  
eyebrows two arches made;  
her voice like jade, clear, free from guile.  
was comely as her smile  
which blossomed like an opening rose.  
What beauty have the snows  
to that with which she was endowed?  
What is a floating cloud  
compared with Thuy-Van's flowing hair?*

Cáo thơm làn giở trước đèn,  
Phong tình cổ lục còn truyền sử xanh.  
Rằng: Năm Gia-Tĩnh triều Minh,  
Bốn phương phẳng lặng hai kinh vững vàng.  
Có nhà viên ngoại họ Vương,  
Gia tư nghĩ cũng thường thường bậc trung.  
Một trai con thứ rất lòng,  
Vương Quan là chữ nối dòng nho gia.  
Đầu lòng hai ả tố nga,  
Thúy Kiều là chị em là Thúy Vân.  
Mai cốt cách tuyết tinh thần,  
Mỗi người mỗi vẻ mười phân vẹn mười.  
Vân xem trang trọng khác vời,  
Khuôn trăng đầy đặn nét ngài nở nang.  
Hoa cười ngọc thốt đoan trang,  
Mây thua nước tóc tuyết nhường màu da.



*But Kieu was yet more fair,  
the elder's merits took the prize.*

*Like autumn seas her eyes,  
eyebrows like spring hills far away.  
Flowers wished they were as gay;  
the aspen shook with envying her.*

*One glance of Kieu's could stir  
cities or empires to revolt!*

*Her beauty had no fault.  
nor in her mind was any flaw  
she'd write in verse, or draw.  
excel at playing on the lute,  
and, choosing tunes to suit,  
compose songs for herself to sing.*

*One such, so sad a thing  
the listeners wept, she called "Cruel Fate."*

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Kiểu càng sắc sảo mặn mà,  
So bề tài sắc lại là phần hơn.  
Làn thu thủy nét xuân sơn.  
Hoa ghen thua thắm liễu hờn kém xanh.  
Một hai nghiêng nước nghiêng thành.  
Sắc đành đòi một tài đành họa hai.  
Thống minh vốn sẵn tính trời,  
Pha nghề thi họa đủ mùi ca ngâm.  
Cung thương, lầu bạc ngũ âm,  
Nghề riêng ăn đứt hồ cầm một trương.  
Khúc nhà tay lựa nên xoang,  
Một thiên Bạc mệnh lại càng não nhân.

*Remaining - from the date  
she dressed her hair, a child no more  
behind a fastened door  
and modest curtains, brought up well,  
in brief peace could she dwell.  
Though suitors swarmed outside the wall  
Kieu never came at all  
to gratify their greedy gaze.*

*Phong lưu rất mực hồng quần,  
Xuân xanh xấp xỉ tới tuần cập kê.  
Êm đêm trướng rủ màn che,  
Tường đông ong bướm đi về mặc ai.*

\*

Like shuttles flew the days,  
till, on the sixtieth day of spring,  
when trees are blossoming  
and petals lie upon the ground,  
the festival comes round  
to trim the grass on family graves.  
The crowds flowes past in waves  
like flocks of swallows round their nest.  
Van, Kieu, and Vuong-Quan dressed  
and took a stroll among the throng.  
Fair ladies passed along,  
and noble, well-dressed gentlemen.  
The crowds divided when  
each vehicle and horse would pass.  
Scattered upon the grass  
were golden-paper ritual gifts  
for burning. Each fire lifts  
the ashes to the dead on high.  
Gold, too, the western sky,  
from which the sinking sun's late ray  
showed up the graves which lay  
like little hillocks all around.  
The three of them soon found  
a little stream by which they strolled,  
while vistas new unrolled  
before them to admire until,  
meandering down, the rill  
passed underneath a narrow bridge.

Ngày xuân con én đưa thoi,  
Thiều quang chín chục đã ngoài sáu mươi.  
Cỏ non xanh tận chân trời,  
Cành lê trắng điểm một vài bông hoa.  
Thanh minh trong tiết tháng ba,  
Lễ là tảo mộ hội là đạp thanh.  
Gần xa nô nức yến anh,  
Chị em sắm sửa bộ hành chơi xuân.  
Dập dìu tài tử giai nhân,  
Ngựa xe như nước áo quần như nêm.  
Ngổn ngang gò đống kéo lên,  
Thoi vàng vó rắc tro tiền giấy bay.  
Tà tà bóng ngả về tây,  
Chị em thơ thẩn dan tay ra về  
Bước dần theo ngọn tiểu khê,  
Lần xem phong cảnh có bề thanh thanh.  
Nao nao dòng nước uốn quanh,  
Nhịp cầu nho nhỏ cuối ghềnh bắc ngang.

Nearby, upon a ridge  
beside the road, the sisters found  
a lonely little mound:  
an overgrown, neglected tomb.  
"Why is there no perfume  
of joss-sticks on the day ordained?"  
asked Kieu; Vuong-Quan explained.  
"Dam-Tien, the girl who's buried here,  
whose beauty knew no peer,  
was so famed as a singer, more  
admirers thronged her door  
than swallows gather on the bough.  
Yet fate would not allow  
this flower to stay long blossoming,  
and in the early spring  
the branch on which it grew fell down.  
A stranger came to town.  
by boat, soon after she had died  
to seek her for his bride,  
for he had heard the singer's fame  
in far lands whence he came,  
and not until he came to look  
was he informed the hook  
had broken and the vase crashed down.  
He entered with a frown  
and found her room sad, silent, cold  
and empty. Where of old  
the horse and carriage used to pass,

Sè sè nắm đất bên đường,  
Dầu dầu ngọn cỏ nửa vàng nửa xanh.  
Rằng: "Sao trong tiết Thanh minh,  
"Mà dây hương khói vắng tanh thế mà?"  
Vương Quan mới dẫn gần xa:  
"Đạm Tiên nàng ấy xưa là ca nhi.  
"Nói danh tài sắc một thì,  
"Xôn xao ngoài cửa hiếm gì yến anh.  
"Kiếp hồng nhan có mong manh,  
"Nửa chừng xuân thoát gẫy cành thiên hương.  
"Có người khách ở viễn phương,  
"Xa nghe cũng nức tiếng nàng tìm chơi.  
"Thuyền tình vừa ghé tới nơi,  
"Thì đà trâm gãy bình rơi bao giờ!  
"Buồng không lặng ngắt như tờ,  
"Dấu xe ngựa đã rêu lờ mờ xanh.  
Khóc than khôn xiết sự tình,  
"Khéo vô duyên bấy là mình với ta!



*the ruts were sprouting grass.  
He wept, but tears could not relieve  
his sorrow "I perceive"  
he said "We were not meant to be  
together. Destiny  
has kept us two apart in life.  
That she may be my wife  
hereafter, may this be the pledge".  
He had made, from a wedge  
of teak her coffin, and with pearl  
adorned her hearse. The girl  
was buried here, where flowers and weeds  
grew on the grave. None heeds  
it now, since many moons ago.*

"Đã không duyên trước chẳng mà,  
"Thì chi chút ước gọi là duyên sau.  
"Sấm sanh nếp tử xe châu,  
"Bụi hồng một nắm mặc dầu cỏ hoa.  
"Trải bao thỏ lặn ác tà,  
"Ấy mờ vô chủ ai mà viếng thăm!"

*The tears began to flow  
into Kieu's eyes and fall like pearls.  
What tender hearts have girls!  
"Ah, what a dreadful fate she had"  
was Kieu's complaint. So sad!  
Creator, why so cruel and hard?  
Her rosy cheeks you marred  
while she was but a child. In life  
    all wanted her for wife;  
now she's a ghost without a spouse.  
Those who stood round her house,  
waiting to woo her, where are they?  
    Since no one else will pay  
    respect and pity, I will light  
    some incense sticks tonight;  
    and from another world, maybe  
    poor Dam-Tien, you will see.  
She knelt, and in the sunset there  
    uttered a murmured prayer.  
For graveside pennants only reeds,  
    growing as rank as weeds,  
fluttered their heads upon the breeze.  
    Seeing the nearby trees,  
Kieu drew a hairpin from her hair  
    and on the tree bark there  
she scratched a verse. Then sunk in thought  
    she stood, her face distraught,  
    till every thought became a tear.*

Lòng đau sẵn mối thương tâm,  
Thoắt nghe Kiều đã đầm đầm châu sa:  
"Đau đớn thay phận đàn bà!  
"Lời rằng bạc mệnh cũng là lời chung.  
"Phũ phàng chi bấy hóa công!  
"Ngày xanh mòn mỏi má hồng phôi pha.  
"Sống làm vợ khắp người ta,  
"Khéo thay thác xuống làm ma không chồng!  
"Nào người phượng chạ loan chung,  
"Nào người tiếc lục tham hồng là ai?  
"Đã không kẻ đoái người hoài,  
"Sẵn đây ta kiếm một nén hương.  
"Gọi là gặp gỡ giữa đường,  
"Họa là người dưới xuôi vàng biết cho".  
Lầm rầm khấn vái nhỏ to,  
Sụp ngời đặt cở trước mồ bước ra.  
Một vùng cỏ ấy bóng tà,  
Gió hiu hiu thổi một và bóng lau.  
Rút trâm sẵn giắt mái đầu,

Said Van, "Oh, sister dear,  
how strange to weep for one long dead!

"In any age", Kieu said,  
"does cruel Fortune ever spare  
young rosy cheeks and fair?

Thinking of her who's here at rest  
I'm by one thought obsessed;  
who knows what will become of me?"

Quan said, reproachfully;  
That's stupid talk, what you've just said!

Your words about the dead  
were turned to mean yourself just then;  
don't talk like that again!

The air is damp here; we should leave;  
it's getting late, and we've  
a lengthy journey home again

"I know", said Kieu "but when  
the good die young, their bodies die,  
their souls live on! And I  
have found in her a kindred heart.

So let us not depart.

I'll hear her call me if I try."

Before they could reply  
a squally wind arose. The breeze  
tore leaves down, shook the trees,  
and seemed to bear a light perfume.

They all ran past the tomb  
to where the wind had gone before;

Vạch da cây vịnh bốn câu ba vần.  
Lại càng mê mẩn tâm thần,  
Lại càng đứng lặng tần ngần chẳng ra.  
Lại càng ủ dột nét hoa,  
Sầu tuôn dứt nỗi châu sa vẫn dài.  
Vân rằng: "Chị cũng nực cười,  
Khéo dư nước mắt khóc người đời xưa!"  
Rằng: "Hồng nhan tự nghìn xưa,  
"Cái điều bạc mệnh có chầy ai dâu,  
"Nỗi niềm tưởng đến mà đau,  
"Thấy người nằm đó biết sau thế nào?"  
Quan rằng: "Chị nói hay sao,  
"Một lời là một vụn vào khó nghe!  
"Ở đây âm khí nặng nề,  
"Bóng chiều đã ngả dặm về còn xa".  
Kiều rằng: "Những đáng tài hoa,  
"Thác là thể phách còn là tinh anh.  
"Để hay tình lại gặp tình,  
"Chờ xem ắt thấy hiển linh bây giờ!"

*when suddenly they saw  
footprints before them on the moss!  
Sheer terror passed across  
their faces. But Kieu said "My faith  
caused this, no doubt. The wraith  
must have a tender heart like mine.  
Our fates will intertwine  
though I'm alive and she is dead!  
Immediately Kieu said  
a prayer to thank her who had willed  
to show herself, then filled  
with joy, traced more verse on the tree.*

Một lời nói chưa kịp thưa,  
Phút đầu trận gió cuốn cờ đến ngay.  
    Ào ào đổ lộc rung cây,  
Ở trong đường có hương bay ít nhiều.  
    Đề chừng ngọn gió lần theo,  
Dấu giày từng bước in rêu rành rành.  
    Mặt nhìn ai nấy đều kinh,  
Nàng rằng: "Này thực tình thành chẳng xa.  
    "Hữu tình ta lại gặp ta,  
    "Chớ nề u hiển mới là chị em".  
    Đã lòng hiển hiện cho xem,  
Tạ lòng, nàng lại nói thêm vài lời.  
    Lòng thơ lai láng bồi hồi,  
Gốc cây lại vạch một bài cổ thi.

\*



*They stood, uncertainly.  
not sure if they should stay or go,  
when, musical and low,  
the sound of tinkling bells grew clear.  
A scholar soon drew near  
riding a sturdy snow-white steed;  
so lively that, indeed,  
his pageboys scarce could keep apace.  
His robes glow with a grace  
in which grass-green with sky-blue blends;  
the bag of "odds-and-ends"  
he bears, marks him a gentleman.  
But when he saw Vuong-Quan  
and his two sisters, straight away  
he stopped, and came to pay  
his compliments. Dismounting there  
he seemed, wearing a pair  
of rich embroidered shoes, to pass  
across the springy grass  
towards them like a man of jade.  
Vuong-Quan who knew him made  
a low bow, while his sisters tried  
to find a place to hide  
beneath the blossom-covered boughs.  
The scholar had his house  
within a village close to where  
their own house stood near there;  
his name was Kim, his surname Trong.*

Dùng dằng nửa ở nửa về,  
Nhạc vàng đầu đã tiếng nghe gần gần.  
Trông chừng thấy một văn nhân,  
Lông buống tay khâu bước lẩn dậm băng.  
Đề huề lưng túi gió trăng,  
Sau chân theo một vài thằng con con.  
Tuyết in sắc ngựa câu giòn,  
Cỏ pha màu áo nhuộm non da trời  
Nẻo xa mới tỏ mặt người,  
Khách đà xuống ngựa tới nơi tự tình.  
Hài vãn lẫn bước dặm xanh,  
Một vùng như thể cây quỳnh cành dao.  
Chàng Vương quen mặt ra chào,  
Hai kiều e lệ nép vào dưới hoa.  
Nguyên người quanh quất đầu xa,  
Họ Kim tên Trọng vốn nhà trâm anh.  
Nền phú hậu bậc tài danh,  
Văn chương nét đất thông minh tính trời.

*His family had long  
been wealthy scholars, well renowned  
for talent all around.  
Both birth and breeding joined to form  
a man above the norm  
in reading and intelligence,  
with more than common sense,  
good manners and a generous heart  
and living in that part  
of China since his birth, both he  
and Vuong-Quan came to be  
young fellow-pupils in one class.  
And so it came to pass  
the fame of neighbours Van and Kieu  
had come to his ears, too,  
like those two girls called Kieu of old  
of whom the tale is told  
that in "Bronze Sparrow Tower" one day  
they would be locked away.  
He loved her whom he'd never seen;  
for an eternity he'd been  
consumed by passion never voiced.  
So now his heart rejoiced  
to meet amid his wandering  
the dreamt of flower of spring.  
No sooner had he recognised  
them, than he realised  
both spring and autumn flowers are fair.*

Phong tư tài mạo tốt vời,  
Vào trong phong nhĩ ra ngoài hào hoa.  
Chung quanh vẫn đất nước nhà,  
Với Vương Quan, trước vốn là đồng thân.  
Trộm nghe thơm nức hương lân,  
Một nền Đồng-tước khoá xuân hai Kiêu.  
Nước non cách mấy buồng thêu,  
Những là trộm dấu thăm yêu chốc mòng.  
May thay giải cấu tương phùng,  
Gặp tuần đố lá thỏa lòng tìm hoa.  
Bóng hồng nhác thấy nẻo xa,  
Xuân lan thu cúc, mặn mà cả hai.  
Người quốc sắc kẻ thiên tài,  
Tình trong như đã mặt ngoài còn e.  
Chập chờn cơn tình cơn mê,  
Rốn ngời chẳng tiện dứt ngời chín khôn.  
Bóng tà như giục cơn buồn,  
Khách đà lên ngựa người còn ghé theo.  
Dưới cầu nước chảy trong veo,  
Bên cầu tơ liễu bóng chiều thướt tha,

\*

*Despite her modest care  
to hide her feelings, Kieu whose grace  
and loveliness of face  
was ranked all other girls above  
was loved by and in love  
with Kim whose talents were supreme.  
They thought it was a dream!  
It was improper, though, to stay.  
painful to go away;  
they wished the daylight would not fade.  
Kim had already made  
a move to mount upon his horse,  
and as he left, of course,  
a furtive glance the shy girl took.  
Down at the little brook  
the stream began to seem more clear,  
and willows to appear  
like silk skeins trailing in the gloom.*



When Kieu regained her room  
the gong's note tolled the sun's last glow;  
the moon began to show  
through windowpanes her mirror bright,  
and, slanting through the night,  
spread paths of silver on the ponds.  
Dew dropped down from the fronds,  
camellias drooped their heads, full blown.  
Kieu watched the moon, alone;  
confusing what had happened last  
with the more distant past  
she murmured. That unlucky girl!  
The Fates conspired to hurl  
her from her place most cruelly.  
That young man; who was he?  
Will Fate unite us, now we've met?  
These puzzling thoughts she set  
in verse, while moonlight fell in lines  
obliquely through the blinds.  
At last Kieu fell into a deep,  
and deeply troubled, sleep,  
leaning against a balustrade.

Kiều từ trở gót trướng hoa,  
Mặt trời gác núi chiêng đà thu không.  
Gương nga chênh chếch dòm song,  
Vàng gieo ngấn nước cây lồng bóng sân.  
Hải đường lả ngọn đông lân,  
Giọt sương gieo nặng cành xuân la đà.  
Một mình lặng ngắm bóng nga,  
Rộn đường gần với nỗi xa bời bời:  
"Người mà đến thế thì thôi,  
"Đời phồn hoa cũng là đời bỏ đi!  
"Người đâu gặp gỡ làm chi,  
"Trăm năm biết có duyên gì hay không?"  
Ngón ngang trăm mối bên lòng,  
Nên câu tuyệt diệu ngụ trong tính tình,  
Chênh chênh bóng nguyệt xế màn,  
Tựa ngời bên triện một mình thiu thiu.



*At once she saw a maid  
standing before her, very young,  
most beautiful among  
all maidens of the human race.  
As pure as dew her face;  
her body seemed to Kieu as though  
fresh kneaded from the snow.  
Her feet like lotus flowers of gold  
were hazy to behold  
as though at once both far and near.  
When Kieu saw her appear  
she went to meet her graciously  
exclaiming. "Can it be  
that an Immortal's lost her way?"  
She heard the vision say  
Sister for ever! Have you yet  
forgotten how we met  
today, when just a while ago  
I made the breezes blow?  
My chilly home you found, a small  
way past your Western Wall,  
where through the bridge there flows the brook.  
The pity that you took  
rained down on me like gold and pearls.  
There is a list of girls  
whose lives must fill with tragedy;  
I've asked if I can see  
if your name, Kieu, was written there.*

Thoắt đâu thấy một tiểu kiều,  
Có chiều phong vận có chiều thanh tân.  
Sương in mặt tuyết pha thân,  
Sen vàng lã đẽng như gần như xa.  
Rước mừng đón hỏi dò la:  
"Đào nguyên lạc lối đâu mà đến đây?"  
Thưa rằng: "Thanh khí xưa nay,  
"Mới cùng nhau lúc ban ngày đã quên?"  
"Hàn gia ở mé tây thiên,  
"Dưới dòng nước chảy bên trên có cầu.  
"Mấy lòng hạ cố đến nhau,  
"Mấy lời hạ tứ ném châu gieo vàng.  
"Vâng trình hội chủ xem tường,  
"Mà sao trong sổ đoạn trường có tên.  
"Ấu đành quả kiếp nhân duyên,  
"Cũng người một hội một thuyền đâu xa!  
"Này mười bài mới, mới ra,  
"Câu thần lại mượn bút hoa vẽ vờ".

*Now for the worst prepare;  
your fate already is defined;  
we are two of a kind.  
Of themes for poems I have ten;  
come now, take up your pen!  
Kieu did as she was bidden, and  
wrote with her fairy hand  
ten poems, as the brush-strokes flew.  
Dam-Tien then read them through  
admiringly and Kieu was told.  
It is a heart of gold  
that wrote these lines like fine brocade.  
No fair ill-fated maid  
could hope to win the prize from you;  
none can surpass you. Kieu!  
The visitor had turned to go.  
Kieu tried to keep her, though,  
when suddenly a gust of wind;  
clattered the window blind;  
Kieu woke and knew that she had dreamed,  
and yet to her it seemed,  
though she saw no one, here and there  
sweet musk perfumed the air.*

Kiều vàng lĩnh ý đề bài,  
Tay tiên một vẩy đủ mười khúc ngâm,  
Xem thơ nức nở khen thầm:  
"Giá đành tú khẩu cấm tâm khác thường!  
"Ví đem vào tập đoạn trường.  
"Thì treo giải nhất chi nhường cho ai!"  
Thềm hoa khách đã trở hài,  
Nàng còn cầm lại một hai tự tình.  
Gió dàu sịch bức màn manh mãnh,  
Tỉnh ra mới biết rằng mình chiêm bao.  
Trông theo nào thấy dàu nào,  
Hương thừa đường hãy ra vào dàu đây.

Alone, and in the hush of night  
Kieu pondered, and took fright  
at thinking of her future years.  
    "Will life be like my fears?  
I'll be a drifting flower, it seems,  
    upon the future's streams".  
Kieu whispered, "but if that befall  
    it is my fate, that's all;  
    I must resign myself thereto".  
These thoughts swept over Kieu  
like stormy waves, and ebb'd as tears.  
Her sobbing reached the ears  
of poor Kieu's mother in her bed,  
    who came to her and said,  
"Dear, what's the matter, little flower  
still wet with rain? This hour  
is late to be so restless, Kieu!"  
    "My double debt to you  
the gifts of birth and food each day  
    I never can repay.  
Your daughter's young and foolish still,"  
    said Kieu. Below the hill  
I passed today poor Dam-Tien's tomb.  
    Just now, here in this room,  
when I'd just fallen asleep, she seemed  
to stand there as I dreamed.  
"A tragic-fated maiden — " What  
    'does this mean of my lot?

Một mình lưỡng lự canh chầy,  
Đường xa nghĩ nổi sau này mà kinh!  
Hoa trôi bèo giạt đã đành,  
Biết duyên mình biết phận mình, thế thôi!  
Nổi riêng lớp lớp sóng dồi,  
Nghĩ đòi cơn lại sụt sùi đòi cơn.  
Giọng Kiều rền rĩ trướng loan,  
Nhà huyền chợt tỉnh, hỏi: "Cơn có gì?"  
"Cớ sao trần trọc canh khuya,  
"Màu hoa lê hãy dầm dề giọt mưa?"  
Thưa rằng: "Chút phận ngây thơ,  
"Dưỡng sinh đôi nợ tóc tơ chưa đền.  
"Buổi ngày chơi mả Đạm Tiên,  
"Nhấp đi thoát thấy ứng liền chiêm bao.  
"Đoạn trường là số thế nào,  
"Bà ra thế ấy vịnh vào thế kia,  
"Cứ trong mộng triệu mà suy,  
"Thân con thôi có ra gì mai sau!"  
Dạy rằng: "Mộng huyền chắc đâu,  
"Bống không mua nã chuốc sầu, nghĩ nao!"

*Look, Mother, these ten themes which she  
dictated then. And see  
the lines I wrote upon these themes.  
What omens are such dreams?  
Your daughter's hopeless fate we view!  
Her mother frowned at Kieu.  
"What omens are such dreams?" Why none!  
Just think! All you have done  
is give yourself this senseless grief".  
Kieu yielded with relief  
to this maternal comforting,  
but still sat pondering;  
her tears flowed like the river Xiang.  
A golden oriole sang  
outside the window by the wall  
where yellow catkins fall;  
the moon shone low across the eaves;  
and trembling thought which grieves  
was all Kieu had within her heart.*

Vâng lời khuyên giải thấp cao,  
Chưa xong điều nghĩ đã dào mạch Tương,  
Ngoài song thỏ thẻ oanh vàng,  
Nách tường bông liễu bay ngang trước màn.  
Hiên tà gác bóng chênh chênh,  
Nỗi riêng, riêng chạnh tác riêng một mình.

\*



*O, with what curious art  
a lover's made ! Who can unwind  
the tangle in his mind?  
Back home among his books, Kim knew  
he was obsessed by Kieu.  
The more he thought of her, the more  
his sorrowing heart grew sore,  
each day three chilly autumns seemed.  
He saw Kieu when he dreamed;  
lamp-oil and moon were on the wane;  
her curtained windowpane  
like clouds kept him and Kieu apart;  
his heart longed for her heart.  
Cold in his study grew the air  
and dry the brush-pen's hair;  
the phoenix-fretted lute grew slack.  
The blinds blew forth and back;  
the incense smell reminded him  
of Kieu's perfume, yet Kim  
thought tea these days withheld its scent.  
"If we had not been meant"  
he sighed "for one another's arms,  
why was she given such charms?"  
The first encounter he'd been graced  
he mentally retraced,  
then went back to the place they met.  
Nothing was there but wet  
long grass; sad was the evening breeze;*

Cho hay là giống hữu tình,  
Đố ai gỡ mối tơ lành cho xong!  
Chàng Kim từ lại thư song,  
Nỗi nằng canh cánh bên lòng biếng khuấy.  
Sầu đông càng lắt càng đầy,  
Ba thu dồn lại một ngày dài ghê!  
Mây Tần khoá kín song the,  
Bụi hồng liệu nẻo đi về chiêm bao.  
Tuần trăng khuyết đĩa dầu hao,  
Mặt mơ tường mặt lòng ngao ngán lòng.  
Buồng vắng hơi giá như đồng.  
Trúc se ngọn cỏ tơ chùng phím loan.  
Mành Tương phát phát gió đàn,  
Hương gầy mùi nhớ trà khan giọng tình.  
Vĩ chẳng duyên nợ ba sinh,  
Làm chi đem thói khuynh thành trêu người.  
Bâng khuâng nhớ cảnh nhớ người,

*as though they tried to tease  
the young man, reeds swayed to and fro.  
But trivia make love grow,  
resolved, Kim strode to where Kieu dwelt.  
How sad and stern it felt  
to see the house behind high walls.  
No bluebird to those halls  
as messenger, though, could have gone,  
no stream to float notes on.  
Like blinds the silken willows hung,  
a jeering bird had sung,  
the closed, barred doors for bad him pass.  
Dead flowers bestrewed the grass —  
where could Kim find his truelove, Kieu?  
He wondered what to do,  
and then began to wander round.*

Nhớ nơi kỳ ngộ vội dời chân đi.  
Một vùng cỏ mọc xanh rì,  
Nước ngâm trong vắt thấy gì nữa đâu!  
Gió chiều như giục con sầu,  
Vi lô hiu hắt như màu khơi trêu.  
Nghề riêng nhớ ít tưởng nhiều,  
Xăm xăm dè neo Lam-kiều lẫn sang.  
Thâm nghiêm kín cổng cao tường,  
Cạn dòng lá thắm dĩa đường chim xanh.  
Lơ thơ tơ liễu buông mành,  
Con oanh học nói trên cành mĩ mai.  
Máy lần cửa đóng then cài,  
Dấy thêm hoa rụng biết người ở đâu?  
Tần ngần đứng suốt giờ lâu,  
Dạo quanh chợ thấy mái sau có nhà.

*Behind her house he found  
nearby a travelling merchant's home,  
who, as he had to roam,  
had left it empty for a while.  
As though from many a mile  
away, Kim, taking it on lease,  
moved in without a piece  
of baggage, save his lute and books.  
He liked the garden's looks,  
and on the terrace found the words  
"For watching lovely birds"  
in letters freshly gilt outlined.  
Rejoicing at this find  
Kim said, "Heaven's writing proves to me  
that we share one destiny,  
meant for each other from afar".  
His window stayed ajar  
and through its narrow crack of light  
he scanned from morn to night  
the villa opposite his own.  
But not a sign was shown  
of her he loved. Upon her door  
the brass lock moved no more.*

Là nhà Ngô Việt thương gia,  
Buồng không để đó người xa chưa về.  
Lấy điều du học hỏi thuê,  
Túi đàn cặp sách, đề huề dọn sang.  
Có cây có đá sẵn sàng,  
Có hiên Lãm-Thúy nét vàng chưa phai.  
Mừng thăm chốn ấy chữ bài,  
Ba sinh âu hấn duyên trời chi đây!  
Song hồ nửa khép cánh mây,  
Tường đông ghé mắt ngày ngò hững trông.  
Tắc gang động khoá nguồn phong,  
Tuyết mù nào thấy bóng hồng vào ra.

*He waited one, a second moon;  
then one fine afternoon  
he thought he saw her by the wall  
where peach tree blossoms fall.  
Kim hung his lute up donned his gown  
and hurriedly walked down,  
a perfume lingered, nonetheless  
naught else but loneliness.  
He paced along the mossy wall,  
and then he spied a small  
gold hairpin on a peach tree's bough.  
He stretched out till somehow  
he reached the pin and took it home.  
"This must" he mused "have come  
from her. If there were not some link  
of destiny. I think  
this would not fall into my hand;  
surely it all was planned!"  
Kim sat all night and stroked the pin  
admiring how therein  
a santal smell seemed to persist.*

Nhấn từ quán khách lèn lèn,  
Tuần trăng thắm thoát nay đã thêm hai.  
Cách tường phải buổi êm trời,  
Dưới dào dạt có bóng người thướt tha.  
Buông cầm xóc áo vội rã,  
Hương còn thơm nức người đã vắng tanh.  
Lần theo tường gấm dạo quanh,  
Trên đào, nhác thấy một cành kim thoa.  
Giơ tay với lấy về nhà;  
"Này trong khuê các đâu mà đến đây?  
"Gấm ôu người ấy báu này,  
"Chẳng duyên chưa để vào tay ai cầm!"  
Liền tay ngấm nghĩa biếng nằm,  
Hãy còn thoang thoang hương trầm chưa phai.



Next day after the mist  
had cleared, he glimpsed a lovely maid  
seeking what she'd mislaid.  
To test her, Kim resolved to call  
at once across the wall:  
"I found a hairpin, but because  
I don't know whose it was  
not knowing which oyster gave the pearl  
how shall I find the girl?"  
"Thank you for not retaining it"  
said Kieu from opposite;  
"Common enough are pins for hair  
an honest heart is rare!"  
The young man said, "I live nearby;  
we're neighbours you and I,  
so should be friends. You lost a few  
hours' rest but I found you!  
You've made this such a happy day  
I beg you then to stay  
I've suffered while we were apart  
now let me tell my heart".  
He brought his love-gifts with her pin  
two golden bracelets in  
a silken handkerchief; then by  
a ladder climbed up high  
over the wall. And there she was,  
modest, reserved, just as  
before. Her face, which he perused,

Tan sương đã thấy bóng người,  
Quanh tường ra ý tìm tòi ngẩn ngơ.  
Sinh đà có ý đợi chờ,  
Cách tường lên tiếng xa đưa uớt lòng:  
"Thoa này bắt được hư không,  
"Biết đâu Hợp-Phố mà mong châu về?"  
Tiếng Kiều nghe lọt bên kia:  
"Ơn lòng quân tử sá gì của rơi.  
"Chiếc thoa nào của mấy mươi,  
"Mà lòng trọng nghĩa khinh tài xiết bao!"  
Sinh rằng: "Lân lý ra vào,  
"Gần đây nào phải người nào xa xôi,  
"Được rày nhờ chút thơm rơi,  
"Kể đà thiếu nảo lòng người bấy nay!  
"Bấy lâu mới được một ngày,  
"Dừng chân gạn chút niềm tây gọi là".  
Vội về thêm lấy của nhà,  
Xuyến vàng đôi chiếc khăn là một vương.

*she bowed, shy and confused.*  
*"Since last we met", said Kim, "I've prayed*  
*we'd meet again, sweet maid.*  
*My body's shrivelled like a tree*  
*with days of misery,*  
*not dreaming such a day as this*  
*could come to me. It is*  
*two month's my head's been in a cloud:*  
*in patience I have vowed*  
*to wait, and now at last you're here!*  
*O looking-glass so clear,*  
*say, could a ray from you, I plead,*  
*shine down upon this weed?"*  
*"My family are pure as snow*  
*but just as poor, you know,*  
*we earn our bread by husbandry.*  
*If marriage be for me*  
*it is my parents who must choose,<sup>6</sup>*  
*these halting words were Kieu's*  
*you heart kind to pity just*  
*a willow, poor as dust*  
*or feel love for a fleeting flower,*  
*I'm just a child; no power*  
*have I to answer your request".*  
*"The wind is in the west,*  
*tomorrow it might rain," said Kim;*  
*"the chance is pretty slim*  
*of lucky meetings in life's spring*

Bạc mây rón bước ngọn tường,  
Phải người hôm nọ rõ ràng chẳng nhe ?  
Sượng sùng giữ ý rụt rè,  
Kẻ nhìn rõ mặt người e cúi đầu.  
Rằng : "Từ ngẫu nhĩ gặp nhau,  
"Thăm trông trộm nhớ bấy lâu đã chồn.  
"Xương mai tính đã rũ mồn,  
"Lần lữa ai biết hãy còn hôm nay!  
"Tháng tròn như gởi cung mây,  
"Trần trần một phận ấp cây đã liêu!  
"Tiện đây xin một hai điều,  
"Đài gương soi đến dấu bèo cho chẳng?"  
Ngần ngừ, nàng mới thưa rằng:  
"Thối nhà băng tuyết chất hăng phỉ phong,  
"Dù khi lá thắm chỉ hồng.  
"Nên chẳng thi cũng tại lòng mẹ cha.  
"Nặng lòng xót liễu vì hoa,  
"Trẻ thơ đã biết dâu mà dám thưa!"

*If you scorn what I bring  
a loving heart — who'll want it when  
it has been broken, then?*

*Please give some token of my fate,  
and then I'll designate  
some old matchmaker to arrange  
our marriage. If some strange  
ill-chance prevent it, I confess  
I'll die in loneliness.*

*It is in vain I've lived and loved  
if you remain unmoved"*

*As if bemused by Kim's soft plea.*

*Kieu listened silently;  
uneasiness was in her eyes  
like dull autumnal skies.*

*"It's all so new to me", said Kieu*

*"but my respect for you*

*and for the feelings you expressed  
won't let mine be repressed.*

*If I have stirred your generous heart*

*then I will, for my part,*

*accept your words, and carve your plea  
on stone eternally".*

*Kim's heart leapt at this welcome word*

*Till now he had reserved*

*the handkerchief and things of gold;*

*he gave them her to hold*

*and said. "So now the deed is done;*

Sinh rằng: "Rày gió mai mưa,  
"Ngày xuân đã dễ tình cờ mấy khi!  
"Dù chẳng xét tám tình si,  
"Thiệt đây mà có ích gì đến ai?  
"Chút chi gần bó một hai,  
"Cho đành rồi sẽ liệu bài mỗi manh.  
"Khuôn thiêng dù phụ tác thành,  
"Cũng liều bỏ quá xuân xanh một đời.  
"Lượng xuân dù quyết hẹp hòi  
"Công đeo đuổi chẳng thiệt thòi lắm ru!"  
Lặng nghe lời nói như ru,  
Chiều xuân dễ khiến nét thu ngại ngùng.  
Rằng: "Trong buổi mới lạ lòng,  
"Nể lòng có lẽ cầm lòng cho đang!  
"Đã lòng quán tử đa mang,  
"Một lời vâng tạc đá vàng thủy chung".  
Được lời như cớ tấm lòng,  
Giở kim hoàn với khăn hồng trao tay.

*henceforth our hearts are one,  
these modest pledges witness it!  
Kieu held an exquisite  
embroidered kerchief in her hand;  
the fan with which she fanned  
her face had painted flowers arranged;  
these she at once exchanged  
for Kim's gold bracelets. So their vow  
was made, their lives were now  
inseparably intertwined.  
Then suddenly behind  
the house a voice was heard to call;  
like autumn leaves that fall  
he quickly to his books returned,  
she to her room adjourned.*

*Rằng: "Trăm năm cũng tởn dẫu,  
"Của tin gọi một chút này làm ghi".  
Sẵn tay khăn gấm quạt quỳ  
Với càn thoa ấy, tức thì đổi trao.  
Một lời vừa gấn tái giao,  
Mái sau đường có xôn xao tiếng người.  
Vội vàng lá rụng hoa rơi,  
Chàng về viện sách nàng dời lầu trang.*

\*



*From then on, love grew richer far,  
like touchstones when they are  
in contact with pure gold; but, too,  
their hearts more gloomy grew.*

*There is a poem telling of  
the grief of two in love  
who waited, one upstream, and one  
who pined downstream alone  
upon the River Xiang; so too  
were sundered Kim and Kieu;  
less hard the barrier which consists  
of mountains wrapped in mists,  
to love-notes, than the circling wall  
around the Vuong clan's hall*

Từ phen đá biết tuổi vàng,  
Tình càng thâm thía dạ càng ngẩn ngơ.  
Sông Tương một dải nông sờ,  
Bên trông dầu nọ bên chờ cuối kia.  
Một tường tuyết chở sương che  
Tin xuân đâu dễ đi về cho năng.

Each windy day led in a night  
 made clear by bright moonlight  
 more rare the rose, more green the grain;  
 the spring was on the wane;  
 when Thuy-Kieu's mother's family  
 observed respectfully  
 her old grandfather's birthday rite.  
 Her parents with delight,  
 together with her brother Quan  
 and younger sister Van,  
 prepared their ceremonial clothes,  
 and with the gift they chose  
 set off to pay him their regards.  
 Alone and without guards  
 save orchids only round her room.  
 Kieu thought the time had come,  
 at last, for meeting Kim again.  
 She spread a table, then,  
 with meat and seasonable fruit,  
 and next with eager foot  
 she made her way straight to the wall.  
 When she began to call  
 her golden voice was hardly raised,  
 his name was scarcely phrased,  
 when Kim stood there beneath a bough.  
 "I must reproach you now"  
 said Kim, "for your indifference!  
 How could you let incense  
 grow cold as soon as it is lit?

Lần lần ngày gió đêm trăng,  
Thưa hồng rậm lục đã chùng xuân qua.  
Ngày vừa sinh nhật ngoại gia,  
Trên hai đường dưới nữa là hai em.  
Tương bình sắm sửa áo xiêm,  
Biện dâng một lễ xa đem tác thành.  
Nhà lan thanh vắng một mình,  
Ngắm cơ hội ngộ đã dành hôm nay.  
Thời tràn thức thức sẵn bày,  
Gót sen thoăn thoát dạo ngay mái tường.  
Cách hoa sẽ dựng tiếng vàng,  
Dưới hoa đã thấy có chàng đứng trông:  
"Trách lòng hờ hững với lòng,  
"Lửa hương chốc để lạnh lòng bấy lâu,  
"Những là đắp nhớ đối sầu,  
"Tuyết sương nhuộm nửa mái đầu hoa râm".  
Nàng rằng : "Gió bắt mưa cầm,  
"Đã cam tộ với tri âm bấy chầy.

*To numb my grief, I'd sit  
and dream of you throughout the day,  
till now my hair is grey  
as if all rimed with snow and dew".  
"High winds and rain" said Kieu  
"kept me away. I'm sorry for  
behaving cruelly, more  
especially to my paragon.*

*My family have gone  
just for today; their absence brings  
a chance to spread my wings.  
Here is my heart take it, my dear,  
for I have come out here  
to thank you for your generous pledge".*

*She walked along the edge  
of rockeries until she found  
a path that led around  
until at last it reached a small  
new gate within the wall;  
Kieu tucked her sleeve up, turned the key;  
and seemed at once to be  
traversing shrouding clouds, and through  
them stepping, awestruck, to  
"Peach Grotto" fairy paradise!*

*Each looked into the eyes  
of each, and saw them overjoyed.*

*Politely they employed  
the greetings old convention bade,*

"Vắng nhà được buổi hôm nay,  
"Lấy lòng gọi chút ra đây tạ lòng!"  
Lần theo núi giả đi vòng,  
Cuối tường dường có nẻo thông mới rào.  
Xắn tay mở khóa động đào,  
Rẽ mây trông tỏ lối vào Thiên-thai.  
Mặt nhìn mặt càng thêm tươi,  
Bên lời vạn phúc bên lời hàn huyên.  
Sánh vai về chốn thư hiền,  
Góp lời phong nguyệt nặng nguyên non sông.  
Trên yên bút giá thi đồng,  
Đạm thanh một bức tranh tùng treo trên.  
Phong sương được vẽ thiên nhiên,  
Mặn khen nét bút càng nhìn càng tươi.  
Sinh rằng: "Phác họa vừa rồi,  
"Phẩm đề xin một vài lời thêm hoa".  
Tay tiên gió táp mưa sa,  
Khoảng trên dùng bút thảo và bốn câu.

*and then, with hearts made glad,  
they wandered slowly, side by side,  
into Kim's study; sighed  
sweet words like moonbeams light as air,  
and called the earth to bear  
its witness to the vows they made.*

*Upon the desk were laid  
vases for brushes, urns for scrolls,  
and ink in little bowls;  
above it hung upon the wall  
the loveliest thing of all;  
a watercolour of a pine;  
the drawing was so fine  
it seemed as though around it hissed  
the swirling wind and mist;  
Kieu marvelled how it seemed alive.*

*This is a sketch which I've  
just finished," Kim explained; "would you  
please write a word or two  
to add some beauty to the thing?"*

*Kieu took the brush within  
her fairy hand, and quickly she  
wrote there above the tree  
a verse which lashed like falling rain.*

*"A wonderful quatrain"  
said Kim. "Such precious pearls and jade  
were never even made  
by poetesses Xie or Pan!*

Khen: "Tài nhà ngọc phun châu,  
"Nàng Ban à Tạ cũng đâu thế này!  
"Kiếp tu xưa ví chưa dày,  
"Phúc nào nhắc được giá này cho ngang!"  
Nàng rằng: "Trộm liếc dung quang,  
"Chẳng sân ngọc bội cũng phường kim môn.  
"Nghĩ mình phận mỏng cánh chuồn,  
"Khuôn xanh biết có vương tròn mà hay?  
"Nhớ từ năm hãy thơ ngây,  
"Có người tướng sĩ đoán ngay một lời:  
"Anh hoa phát tiết ra ngoài,  
"Nghìn thu bạc mệnh một đời tài hoa.  
"Trông người lại ngấm đến ta,  
"Một dày một mỏng biết là có nên?"  
Sinh rằng: "Giải cấu là duyên,  
"Xưa nay nhân định thắng thiên cũng nhiều.  
"Ví dù giải kết đến điều,  
"Thì đem vàng đá mà liều với thân!"



*Such talent surely can  
be nothing but the recompense  
for virtue that's immense  
in previous incarnations, Kieu!"*  
*"When first I looked at you"*  
*sai Kieu, "He will become" I thought*  
*"a nobleman at court  
or scholar of the highest grade;  
my destiny is made  
as frail as wings of dragonflies  
can Heaven's righteous eyes  
on such a union, then, have smiled?"*  
*When I was still a child  
one day a fortune-teller said  
by studying my head  
that "when your hidden light shines forth,  
a thousand autumns' worth  
of deep misfortune Heaven will send  
to balance, in the end,  
your share that's more than commonplace  
of talent and of grace"*  
*So when I look at you, who are  
of higher rank by far.  
I wonder, are we being wise?*  
*"Our meeting should apprise  
us how you're meant to be my mate;  
man often conquers fate"*  
*said Kim, "If any sad event*

Đủ điều trung khúc ân cần,  
Lòng xuân phơi phới chén xuân tàng tàng.  
Ngày vui ngắn chẳng dầy gang,  
Trông ra ác dã ngậm gương non doài.  
Vắng nhà chẳng tiện ngồi dai,  
Giã chàng, nàng mới kíp dờn song sa.

*should happen to prevent  
our marriage, I will take my life,  
that you may be my wife  
hereafter, to fulfil our vows."*  
*Such talking can arouse  
young souls to ecstasy in spring;  
but time was on the wing  
and in the west the sun had hid  
its looking-glass amid  
the hills; so, thinking it would stain  
her honour to remain  
Kieu took her leave and hurried home.*



But hardly had she come,  
when came a servant, who explained  
her parents were detained:  
the party was not ended yet  
Kieu hurried off to let  
the curtain down across her door  
and then, fast as before,  
she scurried through the garden's gloom.  
The path was dark, the moon  
had touched the branches' tips with light,  
appearing to her sight  
as alternating veils, drawn back  
of silver and of black.  
In Kim-Trong's house an oil-lamp hung,  
and in the breeze it swung  
and gleamed through the mosquito-net;  
it made a silhouette  
of Kim, who sat and leant to rest  
against a writing chest  
while half asleep and half awake.  
Kieu's steps sufficed to make  
him waken from his dream of love:  
the sinking moon above  
shone down on the reality —  
pear-blossom white was she —  
he thought he must be dreaming still  
transported to the hill  
where goddesses immortal dwell.

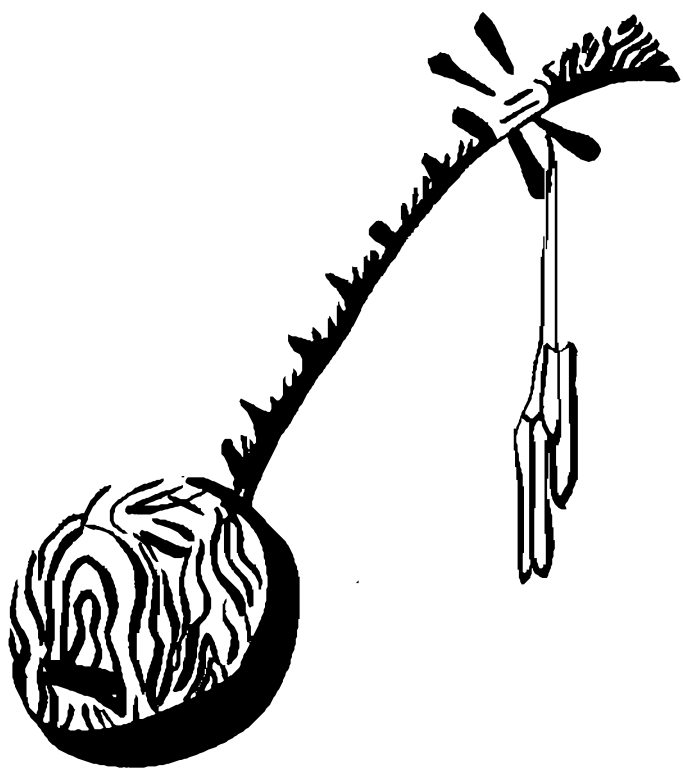
Đến nhà vừa thấy tin nhà,  
Hai thân còn dở tiệc hoa chưa về.  
Cửa ngoài vội rủ rèm the,  
Xăm xăm băng lối vườn khuya một mình.  
Nhật thưa, gương giội đầu cành,  
Ngọn đèn trông lọt trướng huỳnh hắt hiu.  
Sinh vừa tựa án thiu thiu,  
Dở chiều như tỉnh dở chiều như mê.  
Tiếng sen sẽ động giấc hòe,  
Bóng trăng đã xế hoa lê lại gần.  
Bàng khuâng đỉnh Giáp non Thần,  
Còn ngờ giấc mộng đêm xuân mơ màng.  
Nàng rằng: "Khoảng vắng đêm trường,  
Vì hoa nên phải đánh đường tìm hoa.  
Bây giờ rõ mặt đôi ta,  
Biết đâu rồi nữa chẳng là chiêm bao?"  
Vội mừng làm lễ rước vào,  
Đài sen nối sáp song đào thêm hương.  
Tiên thề, cùng thảo một chương,  
Tóc mây một món, dao vàng chia đôi.

Then Kieu began to tell:  
"Across the distance, through the night  
I came, drawn by the light  
of love, to my beloved's side.  
And now, who can decide  
if this is but a fleeting dream?"  
At once, enraptured, Kim  
invited her to come inside.  
With oil he resupplied  
the lotus-like lamp till it shone;  
he put more incense on  
the peach-shaped burner in his house.  
And then they wrote their vows,  
and with knife of gold, each cut  
a lock of hair, they put  
them, mixed together, in a heap,  
then each took half to keep.  
The moon shone bright in heaven, above  
their solemn vow of love;  
each detailed inner thought they said,  
as fine as silken thread;  
"upon their bones their vow was carved".  
A draught of wine they halved,  
and drank, it from a cup of gold,  
and from their clothing's folds  
sweet perfumes blended in the air.  
A mirror standing there  
framed two enamoured faces' forms.

Vàng trắng vắng vặc giữa trời,  
Đình ninh hai mặt một lời song song.  
Tóc tơ căn vặn tác lòng,  
Trăm năm tạc một chữ đồng đến xương  
Chén hà sánh giọng quỳnh tương,  
Dải là hương lộn bình gương bóng lồng.  
Sinh rằng: "Gió mát trăng trong,  
"Bấy lâu nay một chút lòng chưa cam.  
"Chày sương chưa nện cầu Lam,  
"Sợ lẫn khán quá ra sàm sỡ chẳng?"  
Nàng rằng: "Hồng điệp xích thăng,  
"Một lời cũng đã tiếng rằng tương tri.  
"Đừng điều nguyệt nọ hoa kia,  
"Ngoài ra ai lại tiếc gì với ai".



*Said Kim, "The wind's so warm,  
so clear the moon, they rouse desire  
and set my heart on fire;  
your family has not, as yet,  
approved our having met,  
and so I fear to go too far".  
"And yet", said Kieu, "we are  
enraged by all these solemn rites,  
our given word unites  
us evermore, so put aside  
thoughts that must be denied  
that we do nothing we'd regret".*



*"I have not heard as yet  
your skill at playing on the lute",  
said Kim, "though your repute  
is high, and since it spread to me  
I've tried, like Jung-zu-chi  
the music connoisseur of old,  
to travel through untold  
high hills and floods to hear you play".  
"You speak, and I'll obey",  
said Kieu, "although my talent's small":  
A lute hung on the wall;  
and Kim, not heeding Kieu's demur,  
now offered it to her  
"I learnt to play it for my own  
amusement when alone;  
what interest has it for you?  
so modestly said Kieu,  
and set the strings in tune again:  
first major, minor then  
four high, four low, in five-note norm.  
She started to perform  
The Battle of the Chu and Han,  
as soon as she began  
he seemed to hear the armies pass  
with clash of steel and brass.  
Next was "The Phoenix seeks his Mate"  
with sorrow and with hate  
alternately, what could Kim say?*

Rằng: "Nghe nổi tiếng cầm dài,  
"Nước non luống những lắng tai Chung Kỳ".

Thưa rằng: "Tiện kỹ sá chi,  
Đã lòng dạy đến dạy thì phải vàng.  
Hiền sau treo sẵn cầm trắng,  
Vội vàng sinh đã tay nâng ngang mày.

Nàng rằng: "Nghề mọn riêng tay,  
"Làm chi cho bận lòng này lắm thân!"  
So dần dây vũ dây văn,

Bốn dây to nhỏ theo vần cung thương.  
Khúc dàu Hán Sở chiến trường,  
Nghe ra tiếng sắt tiếng vàng chen nhau.  
Khúc dàu Tư-mã Phượng cầu.

Nghe ra như oán như sầu phải chăng?  
Kê Khang này khúc Quảng Lăng,  
Một rằng lau thủy hai rằng hành vân,  
Quá quan này khúc Chiêu Quân,  
Nửa phần luyện chúa nửa phần tư gia.

Then she began to play  
"The Glory of the Imperial Tombs";  
it seems the stream resumes  
its flow, and clouds float by again.  
Her final piece was then  
"Jao-jun stands at the Frontier Gate";  
mourning a love so great  
the princess quits her native land,  
lamenting to the band  
of sad relations whom she leaves.  
The music interweaves  
a pure note, like a travelling crane,  
with a forlorn refrain,  
confused, like distant waterfalls.  
Its opening recalls  
a gentle breeze outside the doors,  
and then a shower pours  
in torrents of arpeggios down.  
Kim listened with a frown;  
the lamplight flickered bright and dim;  
the music moved poor Kim,  
who bowed his head, consumed by doubt;  
"What talent!" he cried out  
"But yet I'm saddened as I muse;  
why ever did you choose  
such mournful music, which must gnaw  
your heart and many more?"  
"I cannot help myself" sighed Kieu;

Trong như tiếng hạc bay qua,  
Đục như tiếng suối mới sa nửa vời.  
Tiếng khoan như gió thoảng ngoài,  
Tiếng mau sầm sập như trời đổ mưa.  
Ngọn đèn khi tỏ khi mờ,  
Khiến người ngồi đó cũng ngỡ ngàng sầu.  
Khi tựa gối khi cúi đầu,  
Khi vò chín khúc khi chau đôi mày.  
Rằng: "Hay thì thật là hay,  
"Nghe ra ngậm đắng nuốt cay thế nào!  
"Lựa chi những bạc tiêu tao,  
"Đột lòng mình cũng nao nao lòng người?"  
Rằng: "Quen mát nét đi rồi,  
"Tẻ vui, thôi cũng tính trời biết sao!  
"Lời vàng váng lĩnh ý cao,  
"Họa dần dần bớt chút nào được không?"  
Hoa hương càng tỏ thức hồng,  
Đầu mày cuối mắt càng nồng tấm yêu.

*"both joy and sadness too  
are gifts of heaven we cannot change.*

*But still, I will arrange  
to heed your wise advice; maybe  
thereby I'll gradually  
diminish all my many faults".*

*Strong passions made assaults  
upon their hearts, with every glance  
they deepened their romance,  
intoxicated through their eyes.*

*Kieu came to realise  
her sweetheart, being overcome  
with fondness, had become  
a little too familiar.*

*"Please do not go too far  
in games you play" she said "away  
and let me have my say!*

*A peach flower is of little worth:  
I would not fence the earth  
from which it grows, against a bird;  
yet that, when they've interred  
my husband's parents, I may dare  
the mourning clothes to wear,  
I must stay pure till I am wed.*

*Who would be interested  
in marriage to those women who  
beside the River Pu  
made dates with men among the trees*

Sóng tình đường đã xiêu xiêu,  
Xem trong âu yếm có chiều là lời.  
Thưa rằng: "Đừng lấy làm chơi,  
"Rẽ cho thưa hết một lời đã nao!  
"Về chi một đóa yêu đào,  
Vườn hồng chi dám ngăn rào chim xanh.  
"Đã cho vào bậc bố kinh,  
"Đạo tông phu lấy chữ trình làm đầu.  
"Ra tuồng trên Bộc trong đầu,  
"Thì con người ấy ai cầu làm chi!  
"Phải điều ăn xối ở thì,  
"Tiết trăm năm, nỡ bỏ đi một ngày!  
"Ngắm duyên kỳ ngộ xưa nay,  
"Lúa đôi ai lại đẹp tày Thôi Trùng.  
"Mây mưa đánh đổ đá vàng,  
"Quá chiều nên đã chán chương yển anh.  
"Trong khi chấp cánh liền cành,  
"Mà lòng rẽ rúng đã dành một bên.



*and blushing mulberries?  
Was it for this that we were made,  
that I should have betrayed  
my whole life in a single day?  
Remember what they say  
of Cui, who gave herself to Jang  
by the temple of Xi-xiang;  
illicit love broke sacred vows;  
like intertwining boughs  
they clasped each other, but his heart  
and hers were far apart;  
the swallow, lacking self-control  
had bored the oriole.  
Their burning love to ashes falls  
beside the temple walls,  
and their romantic tale became  
an interlude of shame;  
they never married happily.  
So therefore, as for me.  
like an insulted weaver-girl  
I think I'd rather hurl  
a shuttle in your face than see  
that you're ashamed of me;  
ask then to whom the blame would stick?  
When flowers are hard to pick  
he spoils who tears them from the tree;  
but while live, I'll see  
that you receive what's yours one day.*

"Mái tày để lạnh hương nguyên,  
"Cho duyên dầm thấm ra duyên bẽ bàng.  
"Gieo thôi, trước chẳng giữ giàng,  
"Để sau nên thẹn cùng chàng bởi ai?  
"Vội chi liễu ép hoa nài.  
"Còn thàn ắt lại đền bồi có khi!"  
Thấy lời đoan chính để nghe,  
Chàng càng thêm nể thêm vì mười phần.

*Impressed that she should say  
words wise and virtuous as those.  
Kim's love and reverence rose  
much higher after her reproof.*



*The shadow of the roof  
cast by the moon grew pale with dawn,  
when suddenly, to warn  
Kieu that her parents, their repast  
being over now, at last  
were on their way back home, a call  
was heard across the wall,  
and so she quickly ran back home.*

*Kim Trong stepped out to roam  
a little while around the lawn;  
no sooner had he drawn  
the branch aside which formed his gate  
than, by a stroke of fate  
a servant with a note appeared  
which told Kim his revered  
paternal uncle was now dead.*

*The letter also said  
his body, on its journey back  
along a homeward track  
through far Manchuria was conveyed  
and it would be delayed  
still longer, till through snow and foam  
it could be carried home;  
while Kim was told to go straight there  
so he could take his share  
in all the funeral obsequies.  
He felt quite stunned at this.  
He stole in secret to Kieu's room*

Bóng tàu vừa lạt về ngân,  
Tin đầu đã thấy cửa ngán gọi vào.

\*

Nàng thì vội trở buồng thêu,  
Sinh thì dạo gót san đào, bước ra.  
Cửa sài vừa ngỏ then hoa,  
Gia đồng vào gọi thư nhà mới sang  
Đem tin thúc phụ từ đường,  
Bơ vơ lữ thân tha hương dễ huề.  
Lieu-dương cách trở sơn khê,  
Xuân đường kíp gọi sinh về hộ tang.  
Mảng tin xiết nỗi kinh hoàng,  
Băng mình lên trước đài trang tự tình  
Gót đầu mọi nỗi đình ninh,  
Nỗi nhà tang tóc nỗi mình xa xôi:  
"Sợ đầu chưa kịp đôi hồi,  
"Duyên đầu chưa kịp một lời trao tơ.  
"Trăng thê còn đó trơ trơ,  
"Dám xa xôi mặt mà thua thốt lòng.

*to tell her of his doom  
recounting how his family  
were mourning; how far he  
would shortly have to make his way;*

*I'm told to go away  
so unexpectedly, that I'm  
afraid we have no time  
to get to know each other well,  
nor even time to tell  
each other all our words of love.*

*The moon is still above  
that witnessed our betrothal vows.*

*Our hearts shall stay espoused  
forever, though we're out of sight.*

*Three winters from this night  
will sunder us, and many a mile!*

*What weary waiting, while  
apart, till threads, now spun  
by sorrow, are undone.*

*My precious, please take special care;  
then I'll not worry, where  
the world's end merges in the blue!*

*"Ngoài nghìn dặm chốc ba đông,  
"Mối sầu khi gỡ cho xong còn chầy!  
" Gìn vàng giữ ngọc cho hay,  
"Cho đành lòng kẻ chân mây cuối trời".*



*These words quite shattered Kieu:  
"Old god, who plans whom each should wed"  
eventually she said,  
"have you become our enemy?  
It seems that you decree  
before we sip of wedded bliss  
that we should taste, like this,  
griefs bitterness when we must part.  
Love will not fade, sweetheart  
though fades from black to grey my hair,  
for every vow we swear  
will keep me year by long year true;  
Kim, I shall grieve for you  
in secret as I picture all  
the pain that might befall  
you on your lonely way forlorn.  
But seeing that I've sworn.  
I promise I'll not play my lute  
to any other flute  
throughout my life. Where'er you go  
as long as rivers flow  
and mountains stand, my love, I pray  
you will return one day  
because you still remember me".  
As if afraid to be  
divided, they stood hand in hand,  
Behind the roof, a band  
of amber light announced the dawn.*

Tai nghe ruột rối bời bời,  
Ngập ngừng, nàng mới giải lời trước sau:  
"Ông tơ ghét bỏ chi nhau,  
"Chưa vui sum họp đã sầu chia phôi!  
"Cùng nhau đã trót nặng lời,  
"Đầu thay mái tóc dăm đời lòng tơ!  
"Quản bao tháng đợi năm chờ,  
"Nghĩ người ăn gió nằm mưa xót thầm.  
"Đã nguyện hai chữ đồng tâm,  
"Trăm năm thề chẳng óm cầm thuyền ai.  
"Còn non còn nước còn dài,  
"Còn về còn nhớ đến người hôm nay!"  
Dùng dằng chưa nỡ rời tay,  
Vàng đồng trông đã đứng ngay nóc nhà.

*How hardly to be borne  
this hour of separation was!  
With many a wistful pause  
Kim inched away reluctantly  
more sad as he could see  
his distance from his loved one grew.*



*Kieu said her last adieu  
then, as he left, shed many a tear.*

*Kim quickly packed his gear,  
saddled his horse, and left at speed.*

*His servant would succeed  
him, carrying Kim's belongings, strung  
in two large packs, which swung  
from each end of his shoulder pole.*

*The lovers, one in soul  
and sorrow, went their separate ways.*

*Kim sadly turned to gaze  
at Kieu's home far behind and sighed.*

*A cuckoo sadly cried;  
his note gave pathos to the view;  
a flock of wild geese flew  
before him, scattered on the sky.*

*Behind him, Kieu would cry  
he knew obsessed for hours by naught  
but the depressing thought  
of all her lover must go through.*

*Day after day, he knew,  
Kieu would grow lovesick and more pale.*

*Ngại ngừng một bước một xa,  
Một lời trăn trọng châu sa mấy hàng.  
Buộc yên quải gánh vội vàng,  
Mối sầu sẻ nửa bước đường chia hai.  
Buồn trông phong cảnh quê người,  
Đầu cành quỳn nhạt cuối trời nhận thưa  
Náo người, cũ gió tuần mưa,  
Một ngày nặng gánh tương tư một ngày.*

\*

*Kieu still stood by the rail  
of the verandah of her home.  
The more she tried to come  
to some unravelling of her mind,  
the more it intertwined.*  
*She thought she was like smoke which may  
be scattered straight away;  
or like a flower which drifted on  
a stream and then was gone;  
or like a leafless willow-tree.*  
*Kieu rose, and wearily  
she dragged her sorry self around.  
And then she heard the sound  
of her returning family,  
whom she went down to see  
and welcome home, and they as well  
all started to retell  
what happened at the birthday feast.*

Nàng còn đứng tựa hiên tây,  
Chín hồi ván vít như vầy mới tơ.  
Trông chừng khói ngát song thưa,  
Hoa trôi giạt thắm liễu xơ xác vàng.  
Tàn ngần dạo gót lầu trang,  
Một đoàn mừng thọ ngoại hương mới về.



*But suddenly, at least  
a dozen ugly thugs all armed  
with clubs and daggers, swarmed  
from all four sides, round and about.*

*They gave a fearful shout  
then seized Kieu's aged father, bound  
a length of chain around  
his hands and tied him to his son  
and next they put upon  
their necks two wooden pillories.*

*Like swarms of angry bees  
the rogues descended on the home;  
they overturned the loom  
and broke the boxes full of thread;  
there was no single shred  
of costly silk or stuff to wear  
but vanished into their  
capacious pockets' greedy jaws.*

*What then could be the cause  
of all this ? Who had given commands?*

*Into what tyrant's hands  
had they now fallen down pell-mell?*

*They begged the thugs to tell;  
and then at last they were informed  
that this had been performed  
because of a false merchant's threat  
accusing them of debt!*

*The family were all dismayed*

Hàn huyền chưa kịp già già,  
Sai nha bỗng thấy bốn bề xôn xao:  
Người rách thước kẻ tay đao,  
Đầu trâu mặt ngựa ào ào như sôi.  
Già giang một lão một trai,  
Một dây vô loại buộc hai thâm tình.  
Đầy nhà vang tiếng ruồi xanh,  
Rừng rời khung dệt tan tành gói may.  
Đồ tể nhuyển của riêng tây,  
Sạch sành sanh vét cho đầy túi tham.  
Điều đâu bay buộc ai làm?  
Này ai đan giậm giệt giằm bỗng dưng?  
Hỏi ra sau mới biết rằng:  
Phải tên xưng xuất là thằng bán tơ.  
Một nhà hoàng hốt ngẩn ngơ,  
Tiếng oan dậy đất án ngờ lừa mảy.  
Hạ từ van lạy suốt ngày,  
Điếc tai làn tuất phũ tay tồi tàn.

*and mortally afraid;  
such scandal would the earth appal;  
the heavens would surely fall  
if told injustices like these!  
A day of fruitless pleas  
went past, the agents paid no heed  
no mercy would concede,  
and turned a deaf ear to their cries;  
going on to terrorise  
Thuy-Kieu's old father, whom they beat  
while he, roped by his feet,  
hung from the roof-beam upside down,  
stripped of his silken gown,  
and racked with agony and fear.  
Such scenes would wring a tear  
from heartless stones! Both pain and dread  
could easily be read  
upon the faces of the Vuongs.  
Should they then use their tongues  
to beg for justice from the sky?  
But heaven is far too high  
to hear and answer such a prayer.  
Alas! It was not rare  
that such extortioners as these  
should cause calamities  
to those whose money they desired  
Kieu sadly then enquired  
within her heart, "How can I save*

*Rường cao rút ngược dây oan,  
Dấu là đá cũng nát gan lợ người!  
Mặt trông đau đón rụng rời,  
Oan này còn một kêu trời, nhưng xa!  
Một ngày lạ thói sai nha,  
Làm cho khốc hại chẳng qua vì tiền.  
Sao cho cốt nhục vẹn tuyền,  
Trong khi ngộ biến tòng quyền, biết sao?  
Duyên hội ngộ đức cù lao,  
Bên tình bên hiếu bên nào nặng hơn?  
Để lời thệ hải minh sơn,  
Làm con trước phải đền ơn sinh thành.*

*my father's life, who gave  
my life to me, that aged man?  
In such a case, my plan  
must be to yield to greater force.  
I have to choose that cours;  
if not; a happy marriage would be mine;  
but then the Labours Nine  
my parents wrought, I must repay.  
My filial duties weigh  
far heavier than my love for Kim.  
I'll face this prospect grim;  
I'll set aside the solemn vow  
I made to Kim just now  
and pay my parents all the debt  
I owe for what they set  
themselves to do for me till now".*



Having decided how  
 to act, Kieu pushed the men aside;  
 "Make way for me", she cried,  
 I' want to sell myself, to save  
 my father from his grave!  
 Nearby there stood a clerk called Chung  
 who neither was so young  
 nor cruel as the others proved.  
 His heart was deeply moved  
 by such devotion as Thuy Kieu's;  
 so he resolved to use  
 his influence for Mr Vuong  
 because his heart was wrung  
 with secret pity for the maid  
 "Well if a bribe wete paid";  
 he pondered, "then it should, I think,  
 make one or two eyes wink  
 of those who're in authority  
 I know they would agree;  
 three hundred taels would just suffice  
 to work out quite a nice  
 agreement with a little nous".  
 So first, he used his house  
 to be a temporary jail  
 which he said, would avail  
 to keep Kieu's father prisoner in.  
 Then to our heroine  
 he came, advising her to set

Quyết tình nàng mới hạ tình:  
"Rẽ cho dễ thiếp bán mình chuộc cha!"  
Họ Chung có kẻ lại già,  
Cũng trong nha dịch lại là từ tâm.  
Thấy nàng hiếu trọng tình thâm,  
Vì nàng, nghĩ cũng thương thầm xót vay.  
Tính bài lót đó luồn đây,  
Có ba trăm lạng việc này mới xuôi.  
Hãy về tạm phó giam ngoài,  
Dặn nàng quy liệu trong đôi ba ngày.  
Thương tình con trẻ thơ ngây,  
Gặp cơn vạ gió tai bay bất kỳ!



*a maximum to get  
the matter settled of three days.  
So young! So full of grace!  
That sorrow, like a sudden squall,  
should violently fall  
upon so innocent a head.*



*A person who is led  
 away from those she loves is grieved'  
 as if she were bereaved  
 Kim thought but little of her life;  
 to be her lover's wife  
 she chose with sadness to forego.  
 "My body, as I know,  
 is less enduring than the dew;  
 I owe my being to  
 my father, as the grass to spring;  
 and so surrendering  
 my body matters not to me".  
 Kieu thought, announcing she  
 was in the market to be wed.  
 Like mist the rumour spread,  
 the gossips talked of naught besides.  
 A dame who dealt in brides,  
 whose home, they knew, was near their land,  
 and leading by the hand  
 a man she said enquired Kieu's name  
 for marriage, quickly came.  
 The old matchmaker, whom they plied  
 with questions then replied.  
 The suitor's name is Ma Giam Sinh  
 the words "Giam Sinh" within  
 his name mean he has a degree  
 from university  
 he comes from Weixian quite nearby.*

*Đau lòng tử biệt sinh ly,  
Thân còn chẳng tiếc, tiếc gì đến duyên!  
Hạt mưa sá nghĩ phận hèn,  
Liệu đem tác cớ quyết đền ba xuân.  
Sự lòng ngỏ với băng nhân,  
Tin sương đồn đại xa gần xôn xao.  
Gần miền có một mụ nào,  
Đưa người viễn khách tìm vào vấn danh.  
Hỏi tên, rằng: "Mã Giám Sinh",  
Hỏi quê, rằng: "Huyện Lâm-thanh cũng gần".  
Quá niên trạc ngoại tứ tuần,  
Mày râu nhẵn nhụi áo quần bảnh bao.  
Trước thầy sau tớ lao xao,  
Nhà băng đưa mối rước vào lầu trang.  
Ghế trên, ngồi tốt sô sàng,  
Buồng trong mối đã giục nàng kíp ra.  
Nói mình thêm tức nổi nhà,  
Thèm hoa một bước lệ hoa mấy hàng!*

*His lined face would imply  
a man of forty years or more;  
exquisite clothes he wore;  
his chin was shaved impeccably.*

*His servants noisily  
brought up the rear in front there came  
the marriage making dame  
and thus with ceremonious din,  
they showed the suitor in  
to where the womenfolk abode.*

*Scant courtesy he showed;  
he chose the most important seat.*

*Not much less endiscrete  
the marriage monger meanwhile crept  
at once to where Kieu slept  
and urged her to appear outside.*

*The wretched future bride  
was weighed down with her private woes  
and equally by those  
which fell upon her family;  
no sooner, then, had she  
stepped forth than tears like falling flowers  
came rolling down in showers  
upon her pretty countenance.*

*Her hesitant advance  
was like a frail and frightened fawn's  
timid to cross the lawns  
by reason of the wind and dew.*

*Ngại ngừng giợn gió e sương,  
Nhìn hoa bóng thẹn trông gương mặt dày.  
Mối càng vén tóc bắt tay,  
Nét buồn như cúc điệu gầy như mai.*

*Deep shame confounded Kieu;  
she thought, "The plainest flowers surpass  
my image in the glass."  
The more the marriage-broker tried  
to soothe, the more Kieu cried  
although the crone caressed her hair.  
Her face was like the fair  
chrysanthemum when day grows dim  
her body sad and slim  
as saplings of an apricot.*





At once the suitor got  
straight on with valuing his loot  
they made her play the lute  
and write some verses on a fan.  
Each gesture struck the man  
as full of charm and so he cried;  
"I come to buy a bride  
at Blue Bridge, as the saying goes".  
Then, wrinkling up his nose,  
began to bargain seriously;  
"She's - satisfactory!  
For gifts upon the wedding day,  
now, how much must I pay?  
Please tell me all that it entails  
She's worth a thousand taels  
in gold," the marriage-broker cried,  
but, leaving that aside,  
the family in their distress  
have left you to assess.  
knowing your generosity!  
Before they could agree  
they bargained long about the price  
of such a merchandise;  
they knocked one tael off their demand,  
and he would say he planned  
to offer them say two taels more.  
At last they settled for  
slightly above four hundred taels

Đắn đo cân sắc cân tài,  
Ép cung cầm nguyệt thử bài quạt thơ.  
Mặn nồng một vẻ một ưa,  
Bằng lòng khách mới tùy cơ đặt diu.  
Rằng: "Mua ngọc đến Lam-kiều,  
"Sính nghi xin dạy bao nhiêu cho tường?"  
Mỗi rằng: "Giá đáng nghìn vàng,  
"Dớp nhà nhờ lượng người thương dám nài!"  
Cò kè bớt một thêm hai,  
Giờ lâu ngã giá vàng ngoài bốn trăm.  
Một lời thuyên đã êm giã,  
Hãy đưa canh thiệp trước cầm làm ghi.  
Định ngày nạp thái vu quy,  
Tiền lưng đã sẵn việc gì chẳng xong!  
Một lời cậy với Chung công,  
Khất từ tạm lĩnh Vương ông về nhà.  
Thương tình con trẻ cha già,  
Nhìn nàng ông những máu sa ruột rầu:

*They ratified the sale;  
more bargaining was now debarred.  
Then each side gave a card  
which bore the name and then the age  
of those who were engaged,  
as pledges drawn in script ornate.  
Next, they proposed the date  
for wedding gifts to be exchanged,  
and finally arranged  
the day the marriage rite was planned.*

*With money in your hand  
what matter is too hard to mend?  
No sooner did they send  
the word that money was procured  
to Mr Chung than he secured  
Kieu's father's caution and release.  
What though his pain decrease ?  
The sorrow of the father grew  
to see his daughter , too  
harshly misused by fate indeed  
he felt his heart would bleed  
his very being fade away  
"What plans did I not lay  
when you were younger?" he complained.  
For like an arrow aimed  
at the best target I would pray  
that you would wed one day  
a fine upstanding good young man.*

"Nuôi con những ước về sau,  
"Trao tơ phải lúa gieo cầu đáng nơi.  
"Trời làm chi cực bấy trời!  
"Này ai vu thác cho người hợp tan.  
"Búa rìu bao quản thân tàn,  
"Nỡ đầy đọa trẻ càng oan khốc già!  
"Một lần sau trước cũng là,  
"Thôi thì mặt khuất chẳng thà lòng đau!"  
Theo lời càng chảy dòng châu,  
Liều mình, ông rắp gieo đầu tường vôi.  
Vội vàng kẻ giữ người coi,  
Nhỏ to, nàng lại tìm lời khuyên can:

*O Heaven ! Why is your ban  
so cruelly upon us all?  
Whose slander made you call  
this family your enemies?  
Send more atrocities  
my fate should be to die this year.  
Why should my daughter dear  
such dire misfortune undergo ?  
By hurting her, you know  
you just increase my misery!  
For death will come to me  
one day, the moment matters not.  
Rather than live and rot,  
I tell you. I would choose to die!  
He had begun to cry  
his tears were running where they would  
But suddenly he stood  
it seemed as though he made again  
a firm decision then  
and down he threw himself, outspread  
that he might dash his head  
against the nearby whitewashed wall;  
his servants stopped his fall  
however, and one grasped each limb;  
they kept an eye on him  
while Kieu tried gentle reasoning:*



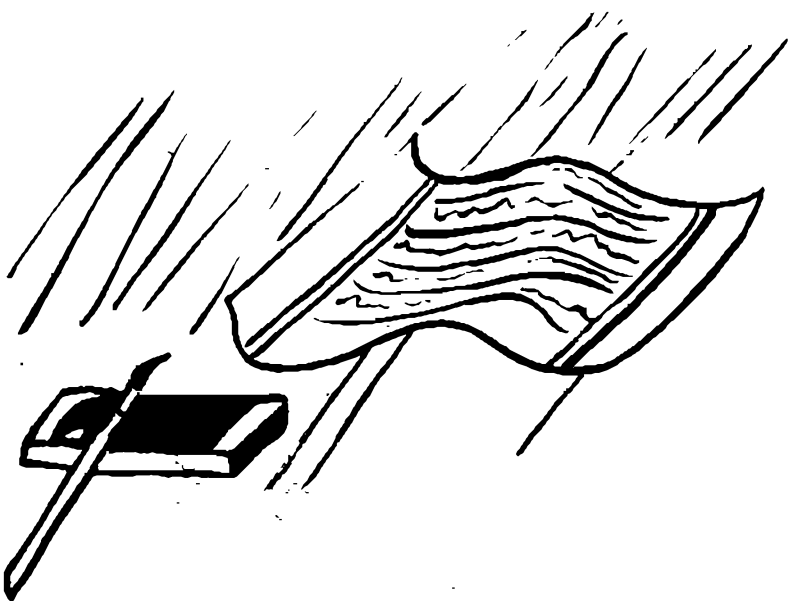
*"Charm's but a worthless thing"  
she whispered, "but you brought me here  
in this world Father dear  
and nourished me when I was small;  
and yet nothing at all  
have I performed to pay this debt.  
Because I can't forget  
what Ti-Ying did I feel ashamed;  
and am I to be blamed  
because I cannot do as well  
as fair Li-ji and sell  
myself as she did as we know?  
My father even though  
you are a very aged tree,  
yet still your family,  
like many branches springs from you  
if I should fail to do  
my part to give myself away,  
then all we love today  
would be destroyed by storms untold;  
my body shall be sold  
that I may save my family  
Provided that the tree,  
has all its other foliage then  
what does it matter when  
one small frail flower falls to the ground?  
I feel a most profound  
desire now to submit to Fate*

"Vẻ chi một mảnh hồng nhan,  
"Tóc tơ chưa chút dền ơn sinh thành.  
"Dâng thư đã thẹn nàng Oanh,  
"Lại thua ở Lý bán mình hay sao?  
"Cổ xuân tuổi hạc càng cao,  
"Một cây gánh vác biết bao nhiêu cày.  
"Lượng trên dù chẳng dứt tình,  
"Gió mưa âu hắt tan tàn nước non.  
"Thà rằng liều một thân con,  
Hoa dù rã cánh lá còn xanh cây.  
Phận sao đành vậy cũng vầy,  
"Cầm như chẳng đổi những ngày còn xanh.  
"Cũng đừng tính quẩn lo quanh,  
"Tan nhà là một thiệt mình là hai".  
Phải lời ông cũng êm tai,  
Nhìn nhau giọt ngắn giọt dài ngón ngang.



*my fear's no longer great  
for what I have to undergo;  
please think of me as though  
a child who'd died while I was small  
don't fret for me at all;  
there's virtue in what I'm about  
to save me could put out  
your flickering candle's final gleams".*

*At last the old man seems  
convinced and takes a calmer view;  
they sat and gazed into  
each other's faces, wet with tears.*



*Now Ma-Giam-Sinh appeared  
in the reception room again,  
and very promptly, when  
the marriage contract had been signed,  
the sums that its defined  
were handed over with a nod.*

*O cruel Marriage-God!  
Why couple so the silken thread  
that random couples wed  
while not compatible at all?*

*Now, it is but a small  
affair to change white into black  
when money does not lack,  
and Mr Chung was very swift;  
he took the promised gift  
and cancelled all the legal suit.*

*The family's acute  
distress was thus for now removed.*

Mái ngoài, họ Mã vừa sang,  
Tờ hoa đã ký cân vàng mới trao.  
Trăng già độc địa làm sao?  
Cầm dây chẳng lựa buộc vào tự nhiên!  
Trong tay đã sẵn đồng tiền,  
Dầu lòng đổi trắng thay đen khó gì!  
Họ Chung ra sức giúp vì,  
Lễ tâm đã đặt tụng kỳ cũng xong.

\*

*Soon, though, the three stars proved  
propitious for the bride to leave.*

*Kieu sats alone to grieve  
beside her lamp and full of fears;  
bedewed her dress with tears,  
and twisted round her locks of hair.*

*"Meekly must I prepare  
to meet the fate reserved for me;  
but oh! what misery  
to think upon the other vow;  
the oath which, up till now,  
has been a secret in my heart.*

*When we were still apart  
Kim took such pains that we should meet,  
and now I shall defeat  
his plans to form a family!  
I sin by perjury  
before the wine is even dry  
within the cup which I*

*and Kim used when we made our vows.*

*How distant from this house  
he'll have to go by hill and stream!  
I've shattered my own dream  
of sharing with Kim-Trong his house,  
Ah! since we made those vows  
so many debts remain unpaid!*

*But earthly hopes must fade  
this life holds nothing more for me*

Việc nhà đã tạm thông dong,  
Tinh kỳ giục giã đã mong độ về.  
Một mình nàng ngọn đèn khuya,  
Áo dầm giọt lệ tóc se mái sầu:  
"Phận rầu, dầu vậy cũng dầu,  
"Xót lòng đeo đẳng bấy lâu một lời!  
"Công trình kẻ biết mấy mươi,  
"Vì ta khẳng khít cho người dở dang.  
"Thề hoa chưa ráo chén vàng,  
"Lỗi thề thôi đã phụ phàng với hoa!  
"Trời Liêu non nước bao xa,  
"Nghĩ đâu rẽ cửa chia nhà tự tôi!  
"Biết bao duyên nợ thề bồi,  
"Kiếp này thôi thế thì thôi còn gì?  
"Tái sinh chưa dứt hương thề,  
"Làm thân trâu ngựa đền nghì trúc mai.

Oh Kim my love! maybe  
 if later I return to earth  
 I'll keep in my rebirth  
 the incense of our vows aglow  
 as horse or buffalo  
 to serve you and to pay the debt  
 I never can forget  
 for all your friendship and your love;  
 if not even above,  
 while yet that debt I cannot pay  
 on me it still will weigh  
 even in the Palace of the Springs".  
 While pondering these things  
 Kieu did not notice quite how dry  
 the reservoir was by  
 which oil passed to the lamp, nor yet  
 did she perceive how wet  
 her handkerchief had now become.  
 But in a nearby room  
 the flickering lamp woke from her sleep  
 Thuy-Van, who tried to creep  
 unnoticed to her sister's side  
 "Capricious is the tide  
 of fortune, which can change the seas  
 to fields of mulberries",  
 Van said to her with sympathy.  
 "Why, for the family,  
 should you alone Fate immolate?

"Nợ tình chưa trả cho ai,  
"Khối tình mang xuống tuyền đài chưa tan!"  
Nỗi riêng, riêng những bàn hoàn,  
Dầu chong trắng đĩa lệ tràn thấm khăn.  
Thúy Vân chợt tỉnh giấc xuân,  
Dưới đèn ghé đến ân cần hỏi han:  
"Cơ trời dâu bể đa đoan,  
"Một nhà để chị riêng oan một mình.  
"Cớ chi ngồi nhẫn tàn canh,  
"Nỗi riêng còn mắc mối tình chi đây?"  
Rằng: "Lòng đương thổn thức đây,  
"Tơ duyên còn vướng mối này chưa xong.  
"Hở môi ra cũng thẹn thùng,  
"Để lòng thì phụ tấm lòng với ai!  
Cậy em, em có chịu lời,  
"Ngồi lên cho chị lạy rồi sẽ thưa.  
"Giữa đường đứt gánh tương tư,  
"Keo loan chấp mối tơ thừa mặc em.



*Come ! Don't sit so late!  
What special sorrow robs repose?  
"My poor heart overflows  
with sorrows", sadly answered Kieu,  
I still want to undo  
the last knot in my tangled thread  
I feel a sort of dread,  
and blush to tell my secret love.  
Yet, a misdeed above  
betrayal of secrets it would be  
to keep the facts with me,  
and thus betray his interest.  
I'm going to request  
a special favour, sister dear,  
if you agree to hear,  
please sit down so that, formally.  
I may with courtesy  
prostrate myself in front of you,  
before I lead you through  
the details of my great request.  
I have an unconfessed  
betrothal to a secret love;  
and now the vows thereof  
are broken while they're almost new;  
please use the phoenix glue  
to join the severed threads for him!  
Soon after I met Kim  
I gave as pledge to him my fan;*

"Kể từ khi gặp chàng Kim,  
"Khi ngày quạt ước khi đêm chén thề.  
"Sự dẫu sóng gió bất kỳ,  
"Hiếu tình khôn lẽ hai bề vẹn hai.  
"Ngày xuân em hãy còn dài,  
"Xót tình máu mủ thay lời nước non.  
"Chị dù thịt nát xương mòn,  
"Ngậm cười chín suối hãy còn thơm lây.  
"Chiếc thoa với bức tờ mây,  
"Duyên này thì giữ vật này của chung.  
"Dù em nên vợ nên chồng,  
"Xót người mệnh bạc ắt lòng chẳng quên.  
"Mất người còn chút của tin,  
"Phím đàn với mảnh hương nguyên ngày xưa.  
"Mai sau, dù có bao giờ  
"Đốt lò hương ấy so tơ phím này.  
"Trông ra ngọn cỏ lá cây,  
"Thấy hiu hiu gió thì hay chị về.

*one night, the gentleman  
and I, from one cup, drank a vow.  
But storms beat on me now,  
and there is no means, though I try,  
to do what's right, both by  
my family and him I love.  
Young sister! Long years of  
spring days are now ahead of you.  
Take pity upon Kieu,  
as sisters of one blood and race;  
for you shall take my place  
in carrying out the vows I made!  
And then, when I am laid  
to rest, and am no more than dust,  
my soul will share, I trust,  
the honour of what you do for me,  
and it will happily  
rest in the Palace of the Springs.  
Here! Take these precious things;  
the bracelets and the written vows;  
for you shall be Kim's spouse  
and keep the promise that I made;  
the pledges be conveyed  
to you that once he made to me!  
Oh little sister! See  
that when at last Kim's wed to you  
you've pity yet for Kieu  
and that you still remember me!*

"Hồn còn mang nặng lời thề,  
"Nát thân bờ liễu đềm nghi trúc mai.  
"Dạ dài cách mặt khuất lời,  
"Rảy xin chén nước cho người thác oan.  
"Bây giờ trâm gãy gương tan,  
"Kể làm sao xiết muôn vàn ái ân!  
"Trăm nghìn gởi lại tình quân,  
"Tơ duyên ngắn ngủi có ngần ấy thôi.  
"Phận sao phận bạc như vôi,  
"Đã đành nước chảy hoa trôi lỡ làng.  
"Ôi Kim lang! hỡi Kim lang!  
"Thôi thôi! thiếp đã phụ chàng từ đây!"

And when, as it may be,  
I'm no more in this world of men,  
preserve these fragments then;  
the tuneful lute on which I learnt,  
and incense sticks unburnt  
left over when we made our vow.  
Then maybe years from now  
for burning one day you may pick  
this of that incense stick,  
or stretch the strings across this fret,  
if so, then don't forget  
to look out at the grass and leaves;  
if they stir in the breeze  
be sure your sister's soul is there.  
Oh, what a weight I bear!  
I'd give my life to repay his love;  
so when I dwell above,  
held in the Palace of the Night  
where neither sound nor sight  
can you below here have of me  
then empty reverently  
a cup of water on the ground  
for poor Thuy-Kieu who found  
an unjust death to end her care.  
The comb to hold my hair  
is broken and the mirror smashed;  
and so I sit abashed;  
how can I now express my thought,



*my feeling finely wrought,  
so sweet and loving, for my Kim?  
I wished in front of him  
a thousand times to bow my head;  
instead the silken thread  
of love is cut short on the spool,  
Why is my fate so cruel?  
My life's a flower cast on the stream.  
Oh Kim, my noble dream!  
My love! My lord! What of my vow?  
It's broken, broken now!  
I have betrayed you from today!*





*Then Kieu began to sway  
words choked her throat, she gasped, and soon  
she fell down in a swoon;  
her face and hands were cold as brass.  
At once it came to pass  
her parents wakened from their sleep,  
and soon no one could keep  
great hordes of people from the place;  
and in and out they'd chase;  
Some medicine! A cup! A spoon!  
Kieu came round very soon,  
but tears flowed down her rosy cheek.  
They fond she could not speak  
when asked the reason for her faint;  
she sobbed without restraint  
and grew hysterical again.  
Van showed the bracelets then,  
"And here's the written vow", she said.  
"And so it's my grey head",  
her father said, "that's come between  
my daughter and her dream!  
Your sister, Kieu, if that's the case,  
will have to take your place,  
but why must iron and magnet part?  
Believe me, honest heart,  
each single word you said to Van  
we'll act on as we can;  
I'll always follow your desire".*

Cạn lời, hồn ngất máu say,  
Một hơi lặng ngắt đôi tay lạnh đồng.  
Xuân huyền chợt tỉnh giấc nồng,  
Một nhà tấp nập kẻ trong người ngoài.  
Kẻ thang người thuốc bời bời,  
Mới dầu cơn vụng chưa phai giọt hồng.  
Hỏi: "Sao ra sự tạ lòng?"  
Kiều càng nức nở nói không ra lời.  
Nỗi nàng, Vân mới rĩ tai:  
"Chiếc thoa này với tờ bồi ở đây!"  
"Này cha làm lỗi duyên may,  
"Thôi thì nỗi ấy sau này đã em!  
"Vì ai rụng cái rơi kim,  
"Để con bèo nổi mây chìm vì ai?  
"Lời con dặn lại một hai,  
"Dấu mòn bia đá dăm sai tấc vàng!"  
Lạ thôi, nàng mới rén chiêng:  
"Nhờ cha trả được nghĩa chàng cho xuôi.

*Then Kieu approached her sire  
whom she made low obeisance to;  
"Dear Father, thanks to you  
I can, all other deeds above,  
repay the man I love;  
and then I would no even mind  
my bones being left behind  
to whiten on some distant shore".  
How can one write of more  
than fragments of this maiden's woe?*

*"Sá chi thân phận tôi đòi,  
"Dẫu rằng xương trắng quê người quản đâu!"*

✱

*There echoed from below  
a rushing roll of distant drums;  
The end of darkness comes,  
announced the watchman to the guard;  
and outside in the yard  
there stopped a flowery palanquin.  
The sound of violin  
and flute proclaimed time to depart;  
and oh! the broken hearts  
of her who went and those who stayed;  
there fell a great cascade  
of tears upon the paving-stones;  
such pain in flesh and bones  
like silkworms emptied of their thread!*

*Xiết bao kẻ nổi thẳm sâu!  
Khắc canh đã giục nam lâu mấy hồi  
Kiệu hoa đâu đã đến ngoài  
Quán huyền đâu đã giục người sinh ly.  
Đau lòng kẻ ở người đi,  
Lệ rơi thấm đá tơ chia rã tằm.*

*Black dirty clouds had spread  
across the sky by close of day,  
and cast a gloomy, grey  
and heavy mantle on the ground;  
the brown grass all around  
shivered beneath the sodden trees.*

*With dripping canopies  
the bride's procession reached an inn;  
they left the girl within,  
alone between four walls, forlorn.*

*Two ways her heart was torn.  
ashamed of her green innocence;  
and feeling grief intense  
over the beauty of her face.*

*The more she would retrace  
love's history, the more her grief.*

*"It had been my belief  
I might earn immortality",  
she murmured gloomily,  
"and here I'm in a villain's clutch.*

*To think that it was such  
a waste to keep myself from stain,  
for Kim, of sun and rain.*

*I wish I'd offered my sweetheart,  
before we had to part,  
the pistil of my peach-flower, now.*

*Who then would not allow  
us to enjoy the warm west wind?*

Trời hôm mây kéo tối rằm,  
Dầu dầu ngọn cỏ đầm đầm cạnh sương.  
Rước nàng về đến trú phường,  
Bốn bề xuân khóa một nàng ở trong.  
Ngập ngừng then lục e hồng,  
Nghĩ lòng lại xót xa lòng đòi phen:  
"Phẩm tiên rơi đến tay hèn,  
"Hoài công năng giữ mưa gìn với ai!  
"Biết thân đến bước lạc loài,  
"Nhị đào thà bẻ cho người tình chung.  
"Vì ai ngăn đón gió đông,  
"Thiệt lòng khi ở đau lòng khi đi.  
"Trùng phùng dù họa có khi,  
"Thân này thôi có ra gì mà mong.  
"Đã sinh ra số long đong,  
"Còn mang lấy kiếp má hồng được sao?"



*I would not now rescind  
what I have done in leaving home;  
but it is grief to roam,  
and sorrow to remain behind.*

*If ever I should find  
my Kim, my body would be stained;  
no hope would have remained;  
trained to a life which I abhor,  
how could I live once more  
the pure life of a simple maid?"*



*— A paperknife was laid  
upon the desk, she noticed then;  
she picked it up, and when  
she knew that no one was in sight,  
she warapped it very tight  
within her scarf, thinking "This knife  
could quickly end my life  
rather than find my honour gone".  
The night dragged slowly on;  
Kim sat absorbed upon her bed.*

*Trên yên sẵn có con dao,  
Giấu cầm nàg đã gói vào chéo khăn.  
Phòng khi nước đã đến chân,  
Dao này thì liệu với thân sau này.  
Đem thu một khắc một chày,  
Bâng khuâng như tỉnh như say một mình.*

*Who was the men she wed?  
Ma-Giam-Sinh in reality  
was full of villainy,  
in trouble once, the vicious man  
had hit upon a plan  
for getting rich by charm alone.  
There lived an aged crone  
in the "red-light district" of the town;  
though now she had come down  
in life, her times had once been gay;  
but now her hair was grey;  
all bent with age, her charms were gone.  
Tu-Ba her name, and on  
some ill-starred day these two had met.  
And what a pair! A set  
of rotten eggs both in one nest!  
Their interests coalesced  
in opening a sort of shop  
in which, without a stop,  
they sold made-up and perfumed maids.  
To carry on their trade  
they scoured the country day by day  
for girls they took away  
to use as servants - they explained -  
but really, to be trained  
to live the life of prostitutes.  
So, following these pursuits,  
by an unhappy chance or two,*

Chẳng ngờ gã Mã Giám Sinh,  
Vẫn là một đứa phong tình đã quen.  
Quá chơi lại gặp hồi đen,  
Quen mời lại kiếm ăn miền nguyệt hoa.  
Lầu xanh có mụ Tú bà,  
Làng chơi đã trở về già hết duyên.  
Tình cờ chẳng hẹn mà nên,  
Mặt của ướp đắng, đôi bên một phường.  
Chung lưng mở một ngôi hàng,  
Quanh năm buôn bán bán hương đã lè.  
Đạo tìm khắp chợ thì quê,  
Giả danh hầu hạ dạy nghề ăn chơi  
Rủi may âu cũng sự trời,  
Đoạn đường lại chọn mặt người vô duyên!  
Xót nàng chút phận thuyền duyên,  
Cành hoa đem bán vào thuyền lái buôn.  
Mẹo lừa đã mắc vào khuôn,  
Sính nghi rẻ giá nghinh hôn sẵn ngày.

*he had encountered Kieu.  
Oh, lamentable accident!  
Ill-fated innocent!  
How could this little flower foresee  
she would be sold to be  
the property of traffickers?  
By lies they said to her,  
and tricks, they had her in their trap.  
By means of a mere scrap  
of paper, and a trivial sum  
of cash, the maid had come  
in a procession punctually!*





*Ma-Giam-Sinh inwardly  
was glad he had her in his hand  
and yet, the more he scanned  
the girl, the more persistently  
a strange perplexity  
filled his inebriated heart.  
"She really is as smart"  
he told himself "as any queen.  
A smile from her would mean  
a thousand golden taels, I'll swear;  
and now this beauty rare  
is here within my grasp at last.  
To pick this flower fast -  
that is the first thing we must do.  
I'm sure that princes who  
are customers will all contend  
with other noblemen  
to buy the service of this maid.  
And each one will have paid  
at least three hundred taels, the dupe!  
Sufficient to recoup  
the stake I laid out, all complete.  
From then on, each receipt  
will be pure profit, through and through"  
But he was tempted too,  
now such a girl was in his power,  
yet if he should deflower  
this windfall, he would lose her worth.*

Mừng thăm: "Cờ đã đến tay,  
"Càng nhìn vẻ ngọc càng say khúc vàng.  
"Đã nên quốc sắc thiên hương,  
"Một cười này hắt nghìn vàng chẳng ngoa!  
"Về đây nước trước bể hoa,  
"Vương tôn quý khách ắt là đua nhau.  
"Hắt ba trăm lạng kém dẫu,  
"Cũng đã vừa vốn còn sau thì lời.  
"Miếng ngon kẻ đến tận nơi,  
"Vốn nhà cũng tiếc của trời cũng tham.  
"Đào tiên đã bén tay phàm,  
"Thì vin cành quít cho cam sự đời!  
"Dưới trần mấy mặt làng chơi,  
"Chơi hoa đã dễ mấy người biết hoa.  
"Nước vỏ lựu máu mào gà,  
"Mượn màu chiêu tập lại là còn nguyên.  
"Mập mờ đánh lận con đen,  
"Bao nhiêu cũng bấy nhiêu tiền, mất chi?

*"Now, when a man of earth  
discovers an immortal peach  
is just within his reach",  
the villain Ma began to plot,  
in such a case, why not  
bend down the branch and pluck the fruit?  
In this low, dissolute  
society of revellers,  
who are true connoisseurs?  
A little pomegranate juice  
mixed up with blood produced  
out of a cock's comb, just a trace,  
and a well made-up face,  
can make a girl seem good as new!  
In semidarkness too,  
greenhorns are easily deceived;  
the cash to be received  
from such a string of men won't change!  
I think I can arrange,  
if old Tu-Ba begins to frown,  
to quieten her down  
by a few hours of penitence.  
Besides, such abstinence  
so long from doing my own will -  
my friends would think me ill  
if I lived so abnormally!*

"Mụ già hoặc có điều gì,  
"Liều công mất một buổi quỳ mà thôi.  
"Vả đây đường sá xa xôi,  
"Mà ta bất động nữa người sinh nghi".

*And so the wicked bee  
came to the poor camellia flower,  
and in that evil hour  
went in and opened up the way.  
But what a rough display!  
No tenderness for fragile jade,  
and no respect was paid  
to such a delicate perfume.  
The nightmare in that room  
was indescribable by Kieu  
The guttering torches threw  
a glow upon the girl, who cried,  
abandoned, cast aside,  
forlorn upon her shameful bed;*

*Tiếc thay một đóa trà mi,  
Con ong đã tỏ đường đi lối về!  
Một cơn mưa gió nặng nề,  
Thương gì đến ngọc tiếc gì đến hương.  
Đêm xuân một giấc mơ màng,  
Đuốc hoa để đó mặc nàng nằm trơ!*

and many tears were shed  
in hatred for old Ma-Giam-Sinh  
and shame and deep chagrin  
that her pure body now was stained.  
Disgrace! she then complained.  
This body, purer far than gold,  
is stained before I'm old,  
together with my own good name.

Now all is endless shame!  
No hope remains for me, I know.  
When life has sunk, so low  
best bring it quickly to a close.  
She cursed cruel Fortune's blows,  
and, drawing from her scarf the knife,  
prepared to end her life  
but hesitated as she thought:

I wonder if I ought,  
when it affects not only me?  
Supposing there should be  
inquiry into what I do,  
it would bring trouble to  
my parents and my family.

But now, only to me  
the shame and the dishonour come

Giọt riêng tầm tã tuôn mưa,  
Phần căm nổi khách phần dơ nổi mình:  
"Tuồng chi là giống hôi tanh,  
"Thân nghìn vàng để ô danh má hồng!  
"Thôi còn chi nữa mà mong,  
"Đời người thôi thế là xong một đời!"  
Giận duyên tử phận bời bời,  
Cầm dao nòng dĩa toan bài quyền sinh.  
Nghĩ đi nghĩ lại một mình:  
"Một mình thì chớ hai tình thì sao?  
"Sau đầu sinh sự thế nào,  
"Truy nguyên chẳng kéo lụy vào song thân.  
"Nổi mình âu cũng giãn dần,  
"Kíp chầy thôi cũng một lần mà thôi!"



*therefore I must become  
more reasonable and less harsh  
but this must come to pass,  
if not now, then some other day!  
She did not know which way  
to turn, or how she should decide.*



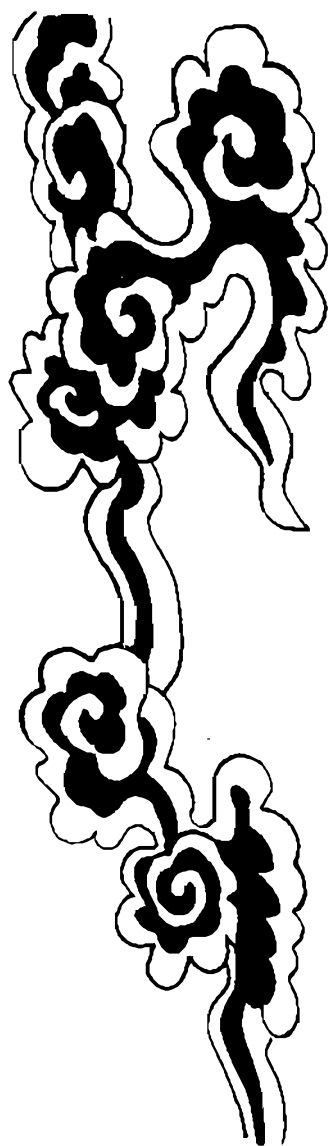
*The cock crows from outside  
shrilled forth so loud they seemed to call  
right through the solid wall;  
the sounding of the watchtower horn  
still echoed in the dawn,  
when Ma-Giam-Sinh was heard outside  
insisting that his bride  
make herself ready to depart  
Kieu left with heavy heart.  
For ten miles of uneven road  
the horses, stumbling, towed  
the coaches to another inn.  
They stopped there, for therein,  
the ritual farewell meal was planned  
at Mr. Vuong's command  
in honour of the groom and bride.  
All bustled round outside  
but Mrs. Vuong went in with Kieu.  
As soon as just they two  
at last could be alone again,  
they wept big tears, as when  
the blood flows from an open wound.  
In whispers they communed;  
"Oh Mother, I feel so ashamed"  
Kieu first of all exclaimed  
to have been born a frail peach tree.  
I wonder if, maybe,  
in my next incarnation, say,*

Những là do dẫn ngược xuôi,  
Tiếng gà nghe đã gáy sôi mái tường.  
Lầu mai vừa rúc còi sương,  
Mã Sinh giục già vội vàng ra đi,  
Đoạn trường thay lúc phán kỳ!  
Vó cầu khắp khênh bánh xe gập ghềnh.  
Bề ngoài mười dặm trường đình,  
Vương ông mở tiệc tiễn hành đưa theo.  
Ngoài thì chủ khách dập đầu,  
Một nhà huyền với một Kiều ở trong.  
Nhìn càng lã chã giọt hồng,  
Rỉ tai, nàng mới giải lòng thấp cao:  
"Hổ sinh ra phận thơ đào,  
"Công cha nghĩa mẹ, kiếp nào trả xong!  
"Lỡ làng nước đục bụi trong,  
"Trăm năm để một tấm lòng từ đây.  
"Xem gương trong bấy nhiêu ngày,  
"Thân con chẳng kéo mắc tay bặm già.

*I shall at last repay  
my debt to Father and to you?  
This cannot be a true  
and genuine marriage, I am sure!  
I've been cast like a pure  
peach-flower into a filthy drain.  
I always will retain,  
though I should live a hundred years  
the memory of these tears  
deep at the bottom of my heart,  
I'm sure, from every part  
of what has happened coming here.  
I've fallen, Mother dear,  
into an old rogue's wicked powers.  
For several lonely hours  
I sat, upon my wedding night  
and when he came, the light  
revealed the guilt upon his face;  
he left at such a pace  
it seemed as though he ran away.  
His manners in the day  
have been uncouth at talk and meals;  
none of his servants feels  
respect for him, but rather scorn.  
He lacks the true, inborn  
deportment of nobility;  
watch him, and you will see  
he seems like an adventurer.*

"Khi về bỏ vắng trong nhà,  
"Khi vào dùng dăng khi ra vội vàng.  
"Khi ăn khi nói lỡ làng,  
"Khi thầy khi tớ, xem thường xem khinh.  
"Khác màu kẻ quý người thanh,  
"Ngắm ra cho kỹ như hình con buôn.  
"Thôi con còn nói chi con,  
"Sống nhờ đất khách thác chôn quê người!"  
Vương bà nghe bấy nhiều lời,  
Tiếng oan đã muốn vạch trời kêu lên.

*Since nothing will occur  
to me of note now any more,  
this the finish for  
your daughter's private history,  
a foreign land will be,  
alive, her home; when dead, her tomb.  
Hearing these words of gloom.  
Kieu's mother tried with cries  
to batter down the skies  
and seek where justice might be found.*





*The cup had passed around  
the guests a dozen times, outside;  
a dozen times they tried  
to empty it, and still they failed,  
till Giam-Sinh's voice curtailed  
the ceremony, and declared  
the coach must be prepared  
immediately for journeying on.*

*Kieu's father, weebegone,  
approached Ma's saddle and implored;  
Have pity, please, toward  
this tender peach, this willow frail.*

*The tragedy which fell  
upon us all brought her so low,  
From now on, I don't know  
how far she'll go away from me,  
which corner of the sea  
it is to which her way will lead.*

*Whichever be decreed -  
to sunny south or rainy north -  
she will have been led forth  
away from here where she belongs.*

*You are mature and strong,  
sir, like a pine tree of bamboo;  
protect from snow and dew  
this mistletoe beneath your boughs!*

*"By our eternal vows,"  
said Ma-giam-Sinh, "we have been bound.*

Vài tuần chưa cạn chén khuyên,  
Mái ngoài, nghỉ đã giục liền ruổi xe.  
Xót con lòng nặng chề chề,  
Trước yên, ông đã nài nỉ thấp cao:  
"Chút thân yếu liễu thơ dào,  
"Dớp nhà đến nỗi dấn vào tôi người.  
Từ đây góc bể bên trời,  
"Nặng mưa thui thui quê người một thân,  
"Nghìn tâm nhờ bóng từng quân,  
"Tuyết sương che chở cho thân cát dăng".  
Cạn lời, khách mới thưa rằng:  
"Buộc chân thôi cũng xích thẳng nhiệm trao.  
"Mai sau dầu đến thế nào,  
"Kìa gương nhật nguyệt nọ dao quỷ thần!"  
Đùng đùng gió giục mây vùn,  
Một xe trong cõi hồng trần như bay.  
Trông vời gạt lệ chia tay,  
Góc trời thăm thẳm ngày ngày dăm dăm.

\*

*If ever she is found  
through my fault to have come to harm  
I say without a qualm  
then may the sun and moon reflect  
like mirrors, my soul wrecked  
on earth, and hewn by swords in hell!  
No time for more farewell  
the coach's wheels began to spin.  
then with a deafening din  
along the highway it careered.  
Too soon it disappeared  
behind a whirlwind of red dust,  
as though a sudden gust  
had blown to earth a rolling cloud.  
Lamenting still aloud,  
Kieu's parents tried to dry their tears.  
Days dragged on into years,  
and not a day went by but they  
would turn their eyes away  
towards the edge of heaven's dome.*



*Far, far away from home,  
and over bridges white with frost.  
Kieu travelled onwards lost  
and lonely in an unknown land.  
Great clouds, grey, heavy, spanned  
the whole sky like a vast dark veil;  
the reeds bowed down their frail  
brown heads in waves before each gust  
of cold dry north wind; just  
as though the autumn had put on  
a gloomy coat, to mourn  
together with the sorrowing bride.  
Night fell and brushed aside  
the mist to show the stars hung high  
within a boundless sky,  
seeing the moon, Kieu felt ashamed,  
knowing she had proclaimed  
it witness of the vows she made.  
Among the blue-green shade  
of leaves, appeared some autumn gold  
where songbirds seemed to scold  
her for neglecting filial ties.*

Nàng thì dẫm khách xa xăm,  
Bạc phau cầu giá đen rằm ngàn mây.  
Vi lô san sát hơi may,  
Một trời thu để riêng ai một người.  
Dặm khuya ngất tạnh mù khơi,  
Thấy trăng mà thẹn những lời non sóng!  
Rừng thu từng biếc xen hồng,  
Nghe chim như nhắc tấm lòng thần hôn!

*How curious to her eyes  
 was all the scenery they passed.  
 The cavalcade at last,  
 after a full month on the way  
 came to Yixian one day  
 the pearly coach stopped by a door.  
 Immediately Kieu saw  
 a woman step out from behind  
 a hanging bamboo blind,  
 a pasty-faced old courtesan.  
 But what a harridan!  
 Whatever could she gormandize  
 to make her such a size?  
 The aged crone made her approach;  
 she waddled to the coach,  
 welcomed the new arrival, Kieu,  
 asked, how did she do?  
 And would she care to step inside?  
 Kieu entered and descried  
 a crowded room in front of her;  
 along one side there were  
 some girls with plucked and arching brows,  
 the other side caroused  
 some playboys, maybe five or six.  
 A dozen incense sticks  
 were burning with a sweet perfume  
 at one end of the room;  
 the picture of a god hung there*

Những là lạ nước lạ non,  
Lâm Tri vừa một tháng tròn tới nơi.  
Xe châu dừng bánh cửa ngoài,  
Rèm trong đã thấy một người bước ra.  
Thoắt trông nhồn nhợt màu da,  
Ăn gì cao lớn đây đà làm sao?  
Trước xe lơ lả han chào,  
Vàng lời, nàng mới bước vào tận nơi.  
Bên thì máy ả mảy ngài,  
Bên thì ngồi bốn năm người làng chơi.  
Giữa thì hương án hắt hơi,  
Trên treo một tượng trắng đôi lông mày.  
Lầu xanh quen lối xưa nay,  
Nghề này thì lấy ông này tiên sư.



with snow-white brows and hair,  
whom houses where a red light shone  
for long had looked upon  
as their presiding genius.  
Twice daily, presents thus,  
at morning light and evening shade,  
of fruit and flowers are made  
to him to form an offering.  
Should some misfortune bring  
no custom to a girl one day,  
then she would come to pray;  
before him shamelessly would strip  
her skirt off, then would slip  
out of her dress light joss-sticks there  
and offer up a prayer  
that he would aid her with his powers.  
Next she would change the flowers  
upon the altar, take away  
the old ones, and would lay  
them underneath her sleeping mat  
hoping that after that  
the god her fortune would transform,  
and revellers would swarm  
to her, like butterflies or bees.

*Hương hoa hôm sớm phụng thờ,  
Có nào xấu vía có thua mối hàng,  
Cởi xiêm trút áo số sàng,  
Trước thần sẽ nguyện mảnh hương lành.  
Đổi hoa lót xuống chiếu nằm,  
Bướm ong bay lại ăm ăm tứ vi!*

*Kieu felt most ill at ease;  
 confused, she knew not what to say.  
 The old dame bade Kieu pray  
 prostrate before the altar there  
 while she intoned this prayer;  
 Oh may prosperity increase  
 for this house, without cease;  
 may each day be a carnival  
 like Springtime Festival,  
 each night as crowded as New Year;  
 may thousands, coming here,  
 become enamoured now of Kieu;  
 like orioles in bamboo -  
 swallows in apricot-tree boughs -  
 may men flock to this house;  
 may letters come like skeins of geese;  
 and every time she sees  
 a client out by the front door,  
 oh may she welcome more  
 in through the back door straight away!  
 "What a strange thing to pray",  
 thought Kieu, who did not understand.  
 Before the genie, and  
 to the ancestral altar, too  
 the madam made poor Kieu  
 prostrate herself a second time;  
 proceeding then to climb  
 on a divan quite gracelessly.*

Kiều còn ngơ ngẩn biết gì,  
Cứ lời lạy xuống mụ thì khẩn ngay:  
"Cửa hàng buôn bán cho may,  
"Đêm đêm hàn thực ngày ngày nguyên tiêu.  
"Muôn nghìn người thấy cũng yêu,  
"Xón xao anh yến dập dìu trúc mai!  
"Tin nhận vắn lá thơ bời,  
"Đưa người của trước rước người của sau!"  
Lạ tai nghe chưa biết đâu,  
Xem tình ra cũng những màu dỏ dang.  
Lễ xong hương hỏa gia đường,  
Tú bà vắt nóc lên giường ngồi ngay.  
Dạy rằng: con lạy mẹ đây,  
"Lạy rồi sang lạy cậu mày bên kia".  
Nàng rằng: "Phải bước lưu ly,  
"Phận hèn vàng đã cam bề tiểu tình.  
"Điều đâu lấy yến làm anh,  
"Ngây thơ chẳng biết là danh phận gì?

*Tu-Ba - for it was she -  
sat down and said in tone severe;  
"My daughter, now come here  
before me you must humbly bow  
for I'm your mother, now,  
and then salute your uncle, whom  
you'll find in the next room."  
Though, sundered by calamity  
from all my family  
I have become a concubine,  
why do you redefine  
my status here? objected Kieu  
"by now alluding to  
the swallow as an oriole?  
I do not know what role  
you'd give me, so naive am I.  
We did indeed comply  
with every necessary rite  
to legally unite  
in marriage Ma-Giam-Sinh with me.  
Gifts and solemnity  
completed we were intimate  
as fits the married state;  
and now you want to change my rank;  
so therefore I would thank  
you if you'd try now to explain".  
At these words it was plain  
to Tu-Ba what had come to pass.*

"Đủ điều nạp thái vu quy,  
 "Đã khi chung chạ lại khi đứng ngồi.  
 "Giờ ra thay bậc đổi ngôi,  
 "Dám xin giữ lại một lời cho mình."  
 Mụ nghe nàng nói hay tình, ·  
 Bấy giờ mới nổi tam bành mụ lên:  
 "Này này sự đã quả nhiên,  
 "Thôi dà cướp sống chồng mìn đi rồi!  
 "Bảo rằng đi dạo lấy người,  
 "Đem về rước khách kiếm lời mà ăn.  
 "Tuồng vô nghĩa ở bất nhân,  
 "Buồn mình trước đã tàn mần thú chơi.  
 "Màu hồ đã mất đi rồi,  
 "Thôi thôi vốn liếng đi đời nhà ma!  
 "Con kia đã bán cho ta,  
 "Nhập gia, phải cứ phép nhà tao đây!  
 "Lão kia có giờ bài bầy,  
 "Chẳng văng vào mặt mà mày lại nghe!  
 "Cớ sao chịu trót một bề,  
 "Gái tơ mà đã ngửa nghề sớm sao!

*"Now it's all clear, alas"  
she shouted angrily, "I see  
you stole my spouse from me  
whom I had sent to procure  
more girls to please each customer.  
The mean, ungrateful cur!  
The scoundrel, tempted by his luck,  
gave way, the flower to pluck.  
Now that the varnish - you might say -  
is chipped and worn away  
the goods are hardly worth a cent.  
The capital I've spent's  
gone to the deuce with no return!  
And as for you, miss, earn  
your keep while you are living here!  
You have been sold, my dear,  
this house now owns you, little fool  
submit then to its rule!  
But when that rogue bamboozled you  
why didn't you pooh-pooh  
his wiles, and tell him to desist?  
Why didn't you resist?  
So young, and yet you long for vice!  
Wait till you've tried a slice  
of discipline here lesson one!  
No sooner said than done,  
she fetched a whip hung up near there,  
while Kieu cried in despair".*

"Phải làm cho biết phép tao!"  
Giật bì tiên rắp sẵn vào ra tay.  
Nàng rằng: "Trời thăm đất dày!  
"Thần này đã bỏ những ngày ra đi!  
"Thời thì thời có tiếc gì!"  
Sân đao tay áo tức thì giờ ra.  
Sợ gan nát ngọc liền hoa,  
Mụ còn trông mặt nàng đã quá tay.  
Thương ôi, tài sắc bậc này,  
Một đao oan-nghiệp dứt dây phong trần!  
Nỗi oan vỡ lở xa gần.  
Trong nhà người chặt một lần như nêm.  
Nàng thì bần bật giốc tiên,  
Mụ thì cầm cặp mặt nhìn hồn bay.  
Vực nàng vào chón hiên tày,  
Cắt người coi sóc rước thầy thuốc men.  
Nào hay chưa hết trần duyên,  
Trong mê đường đã đứng bên một nàng.  
Rí rằng: "Nhân quả dễ dang,  
"Đã toan tròn nợ đoạn trường được sao?"



*"O Earth and Sky! This fragile flesh  
was sacrificed afresh  
each day since I left home behind;  
so why then should I mind  
thus bringing to an end my life?  
She then drew out the knife  
she still concealed within her sleeve.  
Nobody could believe  
that she would dare a suicide,  
her face, though, was wild-eyed,  
which made the old crone hesitate  
until it was too late;  
the steel blade made its deadly move.  
How tragic it would prove -  
this talented young beauty's life -  
if now the cruel knife  
cut off her link with this world's woe!  
But news spreads fast, and so  
the curious quickly gathered round.  
The girl lay on the ground  
lifeless as in an endless dream;  
nearby, the hag might seem  
also to be about to die,  
so ghastly was the eye  
she fixed on Kieu, with terror racked;  
but Tu-Ba did, in fact,  
give orders that the wounded Kieu  
be carried straightway to*

"Số còn nặng nghiệp má đào,  
"Người dù muốn quyết trời nào đã cho!  
"Hãy xin hết kiếp liễu bờ,  
"Sông Tiền-đường sẽ hẹn hò về sau".  
Thuốc thang suốt một ngày thâu,  
Giác mê nghe đã dầu dầu vừa tan.

*a chamber on the western side.  
A servant watched beside  
her, and they called a doctor too.  
Who could believe that Kieu  
still lived within this mortal clay?  
Unconscious, though, she lay  
and seemed to see beside her bed  
a pale young girl, who said,  
"Your sorrows are not over yet;  
you can't escape the debt  
of suffering which you must pay  
to balance, in some way,  
your beauty, in your destiny.  
Though you might wish to die  
Heaven would never have agreed.  
Don't be a broken reed;  
we'll meet next by the Qian-Tang stream".  
And Kieu indeed did seem,  
with careful treatment all day long,  
progressively more strong,  
recovering her consciousness.*



*Tu-Ba watched motionless  
beside poo Kieu's mosquito-net,  
attempting now to set  
matters to right with honeyed words:  
"We live but once", she purred;  
"to spring flowers such as you, the long  
spring days ahead belong;  
it was a foolish error when  
I tried to force you, then,  
a virtuous girl, to love affairs.  
But since strange thoroughfares  
of life have led you here, then stay  
a while, until one day  
some suitor come to ask your hand.  
You're still alive, dear, and  
so all is not yet lost, Thuy-Kieu;  
I'll find a match for you,  
a young man of good family.  
Why then bring misery  
on us who never injured you?  
Wounding yourself, dear Kieu,  
why would you ruin me as well?"  
Kieu thought that she could tell  
that what old Tu-Ba said was true.  
Then she remembered, too,  
from what was told her in her dream,  
that Heaven's hand is seen  
controlling every human's way;*

Tú bà chực sẵn bên màn,  
Lựa lời khuyên giải mơn man gỡ dần.  
"Một người để có mấy thân,  
"Hoà xuân đương nhụy ngày xuân còn dài.  
"Cũng là lỡ một lần hai,  
"Đá vàng sao nữ ép nài mưa mây.  
"Lỡ chân trượt đã vào đây,  
"Khoá buồng xuân để đợi ngày đào non.  
Người còn thì cửa hãy còn,  
"Tìm nơi xứng đáng là con cái nhà.  
"Làm chi tội báo oan gia,  
"Thiệt mình mà hại đến ta hay gì?"  
Kê tai mấy nổi nằn nì,  
Nàng nghe dường cũng thị phi rạch ròi.  
Vả trong thân mộng mấy lời,  
Túc nhân ầu cũng có trời ở trong.  
Kiếp này nợ trả chưa xong,  
Làm chi thêm một nợ chồng kiếp sau!  
Lặng nghe ngẫm nghĩ gót đầu,  
Thưa rằng: "Ai có muốn dầu thế này,

*better, she thought, to pay  
her debt of suffering here and now  
than pay it anyhow  
accumulated afterwards.  
She heard the woman's words  
then said, "I didn't choose to come,  
but if you will do some  
of what you promise, it will be  
a lucky day for me -  
but will you always say the same?  
I fear that, to my shame,  
the butterflies and bees will swarm  
around to do me harm -  
better die pure than live defiled".  
The monster said, "My child,  
relax, I never will betray  
the words I speak today;  
if don't do as I have said,  
the sun above my head  
shall surely judge between us both".  
At such a solemn oath  
Kieu slowly calmed her frightened face.*

"Được như lời thế là may.  
"Hắn rằng mai có như rày cho chăng!  
"Sợ khi ông bướm dãi dăng.  
"Đến điều sống đục sao bằng thác trong!"  
Mụ rằng. "Con hãy thông dong.  
"Phải điều lòng lại dối lòng mà chơi."  
"Mai sau ở chẳng như lời.  
"Trên đầu có bóng mặt trời rạng soi".  
Thấy lời quyết đoán hẳn hoi.  
Đành lòng, nàng cũng sẽ người người đời



*In one wing of the place  
which was inscribed "The Sapphire Wing"  
Kieu spent a sheltered spring  
viewing the mountain shapes outlined  
against the moon behind;  
then watching how, on either hand,  
the yellow of the sand  
by red dust from the road was framed.  
And yet she felt ashamed  
to find enjoyment in the day  
in clouds and sunrise ray  
at night-time in the lamplight's glow;  
it almost seemed as though  
the scenery would tear apart  
the feelings in her heart  
joy pulling contrary to grief.  
The interval was brief  
since by her side had sat her love  
beneath the moon above,  
exchanging cups and promises;  
and now in loneliness  
he waited vainly for the dew  
to bring him news of Kieu  
beneath a far-off unknown sky.  
That she might purify  
her heart from guilt, what could she do?  
And then her parents, too,  
perhaps were standing waiting for*

Trước lầu Ngưng-bích khoá xuân,  
Vẻ non xa tấm trăng gần ở chung.  
Bốn bề bát ngát xa trông,  
Cát vàng còn nọ bụi hồng dặm kia.  
Bẽ bàng mây sớm đèn khuya,  
Nửa tình nửa cảnh như chia tấm lòng.  
Tuồng người dưới nguyệt chén đồng,  
Tin sương luống những rày trông mai chờ.  
Bên trời góc bể bơ vơ,  
Tấm son gột rửa bao giờ cho phai.  
Xót người tựa cửa hôm mai,  
Quạt nồng ấp lạnh, những ai đó giờ?  
Sân Lai cách mấy nắng mưa,  
Có khi gốc tử đã vừa người ôm.  
Buồn trông cửa bể chiều hôm,  
Thuyền ai thấp thoáng cánh buồm xa xa  
Buồn trông ngọn nước mới sa,  
Hoa trôi man mác biết là về đâu?  
Buồn trông nội cỏ dầu dầu,  
Chân mây mặt đất một màu xanh xanh.

*her by their open door  
as they did daily, morn and eve.  
Who was there to relieve  
them from the summer's heat with fans,  
or warm up their divans  
to sleep in, in the winter's cold?  
Oh, as in days of old  
when aged Lai dressed as a child,  
his parents were beguiled  
to think that they were still quite young.  
Kieu wished to be among  
her family, and there to stay.  
But now, how far away  
by rains and sun had she been brought  
in exile from their court!  
Maybe the trunk of the old tree  
which grew there now would be  
too big to reach round any more.  
Sadly she stared and saw  
the fields of brown and withered grass  
climb till they slowly pass  
to blue where blue sky meets the moor.  
Sadly she stared and saw  
the spindrift driven by the wind.  
Waves beat against her mind;  
forlorn midst unknown hills and sea  
Kieu murmured verses she  
had written to express her grief.*

*Buồn trông gió cuốn mặt duềnh,  
Ầm ầm tiếng sóng kêu quanh ghế ngồi.*

\*

*Chung quanh những nước non người,  
Đau lòng lưu lạc nên vài bốn câu.*

*Moved quite beyond belief,  
Kieu dropped the curtain and a tear  
and was amazed to hear  
an unknown voice outside rehearse  
at once a second verse  
with the same rhymes as hers before;  
then through a crack she saw  
a young man in the prime of spring;  
he wore fine tailoring;  
"A literary family"  
she reasoned, "his must be".  
They told her he was called So-Khanh.*

*This dandy gentleman  
appeared to fall in love with Kieu  
when he could only view  
her silhouette upon the blind.*

*"How terrible to find  
such beauty, such a rare perfume,  
wasted in such a room"  
she heard the stranger say aloud.  
"Enthroned upon a cloud,  
or on the moon, this gem should be;*

*it is a shame to see  
so fine a flower fall so low!  
It angers me to know  
the gods allow such villainy.  
Who can explain for me  
the inmost feelings of my heart?*

Ngâm ngùi rủ bức rèm châu.  
Cách tường nghe có tiếng dàu họa vờn.  
Một chàng vừa trạc thanh xuân.  
Hình dung chài chuốt áo khăn dụn dàng.  
Nghĩ rằng cũng mạch thư hương.  
Hỏi ra mới biết rằng chàng Sở Khanh  
Bóng nga thấp thoáng dưới mình.  
Trong nàng, chàng cũng ra tình đeo dàu:  
"Than ôi! sắc nước hương trời,  
Tiếc cho dàu bông lạc loài đến đây?  
"Giá đành trong nguyệt trên mây,  
"Hoa sao hoa khéo dọa đầy bấy hoa?  
"Tức gan riêng giận trời giở,  
"Lòng này ai tỏ cho tu, hỡi lòng?  
"Thuyền quền ví biết anh hùng,  
"Ra tay tháo cũi sổ lồng như chơi!"

*O lovely work of art,  
bravely I'd break the bars of brass  
that cage you here, alas,  
if I your freedom could restore".*

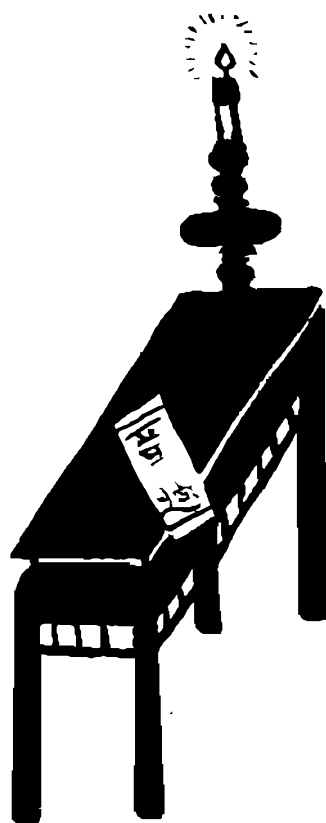




*Kieu shut the outer door,  
but still the words that he had said  
re-echoed in her head;  
she thought of him, then of her plight;  
her heart felt strangely light;  
her loneliness had gone away  
"To wait day after day"  
Kieu told herself, "might keep me here  
until that fateful year  
I leave this world of dust and wind";  
Then, making up her mind  
and sitting down at once, she wrote  
to this So-Khanh'a note,  
begging the young man that he might  
redeem her from her plight;  
by stretching forth his generous hand.  
She made him understand  
all that had happened, from the day  
she sold herself away  
to save her parents, as was due,  
until she came into  
this house of shame, and then what passed.  
The next day, when the last  
mist had dispersed, dawn's harbinger,  
she had a messenger  
carry the note to the gallant.  
When gold beams were aslant  
the west, they brought his answer round*

Song thu đã khép cánh ngoài,  
Tai còn đồng vọng mấy lời sắt đánh.  
Nghĩ người thôi lại nghĩ mình,  
Cầm lòng chưa xốt lại tình bơ vơ.  
Những là lần lửa nắng mưa,  
Kiếp phong trần biết bao giờ là thôi?  
Đánh liều nhấn một hai lời,  
Nhờ tay tế độ vớt người trầm luân.  
Mảnh tiền kẻ hết xa gần,  
Nỗi nhà báo đáp nỗi thân lạc loài.  
Tan sương vừa rạng ngày mai,  
Liền hồng nàng mới nhấn lời gởi sang.  
Trời tây lãng đãng bóng vàng,  
Phục thư đã thấy tin chàng đến nơi.  
Mở xem một bức tuyền mai,  
Rành rành tích viết có hai chữ đề  
Lấy trong ý tứ mà suy.  
"Ngày hai mươi một mất thì, phải chăng?"

*Kieu opened it, and found  
there, painted with a careful hand,  
and apricot flower and  
the Chinese letters "Yue" and "Shi";  
immediately she  
began to break the code, and coax  
a meaning from the strokes  
deciphering that it must mean.  
"I'll come for you between  
seven and nine o'clock, my love  
upon the evening of  
the twenty-first day of the moon".*



*The birds had ceased their tune,  
and flown at evening to the wood;  
through the camellias could  
the low moon scarce be seen at all.*

*Then on the eastern wall  
the shadows of the branches danced;  
with pounding heart, Kieu glanced  
between the window-blinds to see*

*So-Khanh steal silently  
up the verandah's wooden stair.*

*She managed though, to dare  
to step outside to greet him, and  
with nervously clasped hands,  
she whispered, "I'm of no esteem,  
the flotsam on life's stream,  
one homely little sparrow strayed  
all lonely and afraid  
midst orioles and swallows fair.*

*And yet into your care,  
alive, my flesh I will entrust,  
and dead, my bones and dust.  
And in return, when I am dead,  
I'll care for you instead,  
as poets say once came to pass;  
I'll trip your foes as grass,  
or bring you bracelets as a bird"*

*In silence So-Khanh heard  
her speak, then nodded and began:*

Chìm hòm thoi thốt về rừng,  
Đóa trà mi đã ngậm gương nửa vành.  
Tường đông lay động bóng cảnh,  
Rẽ song đã thấy Sở Khanh lên vào.  
Sượng sùng đánh đàn ra chào,  
Lạy thôi nàng mới rì trao an cần.  
Rằng: "Tôi bèo bọt chút thân,  
"Lạc đàn mang lấy nợ nần yền anh  
"Đám nhờ cốt nhục tử sinh,  
"Còn nhiều kết cớ ngậm vành về sau!"  
Lặng nghe lẩm nhẩm gật đầu.  
"Ta đây nào phải ai đàn mà rằng!  
"Nàng đã biết đến ta chăng,  
"Bể trầm luân, lấp cho băng mới thôi"  
Nàng rằng: "Muôn sự ơn người,  
"Thế nào xin quyết một bài cho xong".  
Rằng: "Ta có ngựa truy phong,  
"Có tên dưới trướng vốn dòng kiện nhu.

*"You've come to the right man.  
Because you have appealed to me  
I'd fill up all the sea  
to stop you drowning, any day!  
"Please settle on some way  
to rescue me from here" begged Kieu,  
"for all depends on you"  
"I have some very speedy steeds,  
and servants for my needs;  
let's grasp this opportunity  
and flee hence secretly;  
of all the six and thirty ways  
for you to leave this place,  
is there a better one than this?  
Nothing can go amiss,  
in wind and rain I'll be with you".  
Thus spoke So-Khanh to Kieu;  
suspicion grew in her at last  
that he had moved too fast;  
but life had little value now,  
so why not see just how  
far fickle Fate would lead, and where?  
Together down the stair  
they stole to where the horses stood;  
as softly as they could  
they rode away in single file.*

"Thừa cơ lên bước ra đi,  
"Ba mươi sáu chước, chước gì là hơn.  
"Dù khi gió kếp mưa đơn,  
"Có ta đây cũng chẳng cơn có gì!"  
Nghe lời, nàng đã sinh nghi,  
Song đà quá đổi quẩn gi được thân.  
Cũng liều nhắm mắt đưa chân,  
Mà xem con tạo xoay vần đến đâu!  
Cùng nhau lên bước xuống lầu,  
Song song ngựa trước ngựa sau một đoàn.



*Mile after weary mile  
the autumn night dragged slowly by;  
the raindrops from the sky  
were dripping like a water-clock;  
from each tree, in a flock,  
leaves fluttered in the gusts of wind;  
the setting moon behind  
a mountain tried to hide its glass;  
upon the path the grass  
appeared discoloured by the dew.  
These sights all made Thuy-Kieu  
more homesick every step she rode.  
Suddenly, cockerels crowed  
and many human voices bayed  
behind the fleeing maid,  
whose heartbeat quickened dreadfully.  
She turned around to see  
whether So-Khanh her champion,  
would save her from the ruffians  
he and his horse had disappeared!  
Not knowing what she feared,  
sitting side-saddle, still as stone,  
lost in the woods alone,  
Kieu let her steed stroll aimlessly.  
Oh cruel Destiny!  
Why should you seem so to forget  
this battered violet  
as still to stamp upon her head?*

Đêm thu khắc lậu canh tàn,  
Gió cây trút lá trắng ngàn ngậm gương.  
Lối mòn cỏ nhợt màu sương,  
Làng quê đi một bước đường một đau.  
Tiếng gà xao xác gáy mau,  
Tiếng người đau đã máu sau dây dăng.  
Nàng càng thốn thức gan vàng.  
Sở Khanh đã rẽ dây cương lối nào!  
Một mình khôn biết làm sao,  
Dặm rừng bước thấp bước cao hãi hùng.  
Hóa nhĩ thật có nữ lòng,  
Àm chi giày tía vò hồng lấm nâu!

*Fulfilling all her dread,  
some men and women straight away  
from both sides of the way  
rushed out upon her through the mist.  
In order to resist  
where could she tigers' claws have found  
to dig into the ground?  
Or where find wings that she might fly  
away into the sky  
in order that she might escape?  
Here was the bulky shape  
of Tu-Ba coming straight for Kieu;  
puffing and panting too  
she grabbed and dragged her home on foot.  
No words! No questions put!  
Her brutal hands beat ruthlessly  
on this frail willow-tree,  
this pitiable flower-bud.  
What man of flesh and blood,  
what heart would not be wrung to see  
so much brutality  
against so fair and fine a maid?  
Having her escapade  
confessed, forgiveness to implore.  
Kieu fell down on the floor,  
bumping her tired and bloodied head.  
Between her groans, she said,  
"I'm only an unlucky maid*

Một đoàn đồ đến trước sau,  
Vuốt đầu xuống đất cánh đầu lên trời.  
Tú bà tóc thẳng đến nơi,  
Hăm hăm áp điệu một hơi lại nhà.  
Hung hăng chẳng hỏi chẳng tra,  
Đang tay vùi liễu dập hoa tươi bời.  
Thịt da ai cũng là người,  
Lòng nào hồng rụng thắm rời chẳng đau.  
Hết lời thú phục khẩn cầu,  
Uốn lưng thịt đổ giập đầu máu sa.  
Rằng: "Tôi chút phận đàn bà,  
"Nước non lia cửa lia nhà đến đây.  
"Bây giờ sống thác ở tay,  
"Thần này đã đến thế này thì thôi!  
"Nhưng tôi có sà chi tôi,  
"Phận tôi đành vậy vốn người dễ dãi?  
"Thần lươn bao quản lấm đầu,  
"Chút lòng trinh bạch từ sau xin chờ".

*though streams and hills conveyed  
away from home and family;  
now I'm in slavery  
how could I guess I'd come to this?  
This is my Nemesis;  
my fate is, not to count one bit;  
I am resignes to it.  
What of the money you have paid?  
Eel-like, I'm not afraid  
of dirtying my head this time  
by crawling in the slime -  
my modest scruples I'll suppress".*



*The aged panderess  
took prompt advantage of this word;  
demanding that a third  
party Kieu's conduct guaranteed,  
she made a written deed.  
Among Kieu's mates in misery  
was one whose sympathy  
for Kieu induced her to stand bail,  
with all that would entail,  
and Ma-Kieu was the other's name.  
Old Tu-Ba, just the same,  
was speaking angrily to Kieu -  
but sometimes sweetly, too -  
while fixing terms to bind her fast;  
forgiving her at last  
after her wrath had had its way.*

Được lời mụ mới tùy cơ,  
Bắt người bảo lĩnh làm tờ cung chiếu.  
Bày vai có ở Mã Kiều,  
Xót nàng ra mới đánh liều chịu đoan.  
Mụ càng kể nhặt kể khoan.  
Gạn gùng đến mực nồng nàn mới tha.



They carried Kieu away  
 to rest within an inner room;  
 poor crumpled flower! To whom  
 Ma-Kieu said confidentially.  
 "You very stupidly  
 have let yourself be taken in.  
 Wherever have you been  
 not to have heard about So-Khanh,  
 a most notorious man  
 in red-light districts for deceit?  
 How often has this cheat  
 trod under foot a flower like you!  
 This feint is nothing new;  
 it is his favourite fencing trick:  
 no wonder he will stick  
 to Tu-Ba, hand in glove with her  
 like witch and sorcerer;  
 she paid him thirty taels or more,  
 for otherwise, I'm sure  
 he'd not have played this comedy.  
 It's no surprise to me  
 he broke the promises he made  
 as soon as they were said.  
 I'd hold your tongue if I were you -  
 do nothing silly, Kieu -  
 that's if you want to stay alive!  
 The fellow did contrive,  
 by swearing very solemnly  
 vilely to hoodwink me;  
 how could I know that he was bad?  
 Pensive was Kieu, and sad,  
 when, brazen-faced, So-Khanh appeared,

Vực nàng vào nghỉ trong nhà,  
Mã Kiều lại ngỏ ý ra dặn lời:  
"Thôi đà mắc lận thì thôi!  
"Đi đâu chẳng biết con người Sở Khanh?"  
"Bạc tình nổi tiếng lâu xanh,  
"Một tay chôn biết mấy cành phù dung.  
"Đà đao lập sẵn chước dùng,  
"Lạ gì một cốt một đồng xưa nay!  
Có ba mươi lạng trao tay,  
"Không dung chỉ có chuyện này trò kia!  
"Rời ra trở mặt tức thì,  
"Bớt lời, liệu chớ sân si thiệt đời!"  
Nàng rằng: "Thề thốt nặng lời,  
"Có đâu mà lại ra người hiểm sâu!"  
Còn đương suy trước nghĩ sau,  
Mặt mo đã thấy ở đâu dẫn vào.

*"What's all this fuss?" he sneered.  
Some bitch accuses me, they say,  
of leading her astray,  
then let her say it to my face!  
Said Kieu, "If that's the case,  
if you deny it, I'll concur",  
So-Khanh stepped up to her,  
his hand raised, with an angry shout.  
"Oh, Heaven", Kieu cried out.  
"Who made the swallow fly away  
and led the swift astray?  
Who dashed me down into this pit?  
Is he denying it?  
I have the letter here to see  
on which he wrote "Yue Shi",  
so this face is the culprit's face!  
Each person in that place  
was moved by her sincerity;  
for So-Khanh's treachery  
some laughed at him, while others blamed;  
and thus he was proclaimed  
a guilty, faithless hypocrite;  
he could not counter it,  
and so he beat a quick retreat.*

Sở Khanh lên nểng rêu rao,  
Rằng: "Nghe mới có con nào ở đây,  
"Phao cho quyền gó rụ mây,  
"Hãy xem có biết mặt này là ai?"  
Nàng rằng: Thôi thế thì thôi,  
"Rằng không thì cũng vâng lời rằng không!"  
Sở Khanh quát mắng dùng dưng,  
Bước vào vừa rắp thì hùng ra tay.  
Nàng rằng: "Trời nhé có hay!  
"Quyến anh rủ yến sự này tại ai?"  
"Đem người đẩy xuống giếng thôi,  
"Nói rồi, rồi lại ăn lời được ngay!  
"Còn tiền tích viết ở tay,  
"Rõ ràng mặt ấy mặt này chút ai?"  
Lời ngay đông mặt trong ngoài,  
Kẻ chê bất nghĩa người cười vô lương!  
Phụ tình án đã rõ ràng,  
Dơ tuồng, nghi mới kiếm đường tháo lui.

Alone in her defeat,  
marking each minute with a tear,  
Kieu thought of her career,  
that such a girl, more pure than snow,  
more bright than silver's glow,  
now, in this world of wind and dust  
should have to suffer just  
the same as evil people do!  
"Sorrow or joy", thought Kieu,  
are part of all existences;  
however fair she is  
no woman lives for ever, though;  
because I failed to show  
perfection in some previous sphere,  
I have to finish here  
that which was uncompleted there.  
I never can repair  
the shattered vase of lives gone past  
then let me pay at last  
the cost of it before I die!

. Buồng riêng, riêng những sự sù.  
Nghĩ thân mà lại ngậm ngùi cho thân.  
"Tiếc thay trong giá trắng ngần,  
"Đến phong trần cũng phong trần như ai!  
"Té vui cũng một kiếp người.  
"Hồng nhan phải giống ở đời mãi ru!  
"Kiếp xưa đã rụng đường tu,  
"Kiếp này chẳng kéo đèn bù mới xuôi!  
"Dẫu sao bình đã vỡ rồi,  
"Lấy thân mà trả nợ đời cho xong!"

\*

*The days were drawing nigh  
of the bright mirror of full-moon;  
old Tu-Ba very soon  
came in to give advice to Kieu;  
"It will be hard for you,  
the art of entertaining men,  
but you must learn it when  
you dwell in pleasure's bright domains'  
"Already winds and rains  
have swamped my life. Won't it suffice,  
my body's sacrifice,  
or must I sell my soul?" Kieu cried,  
The madam then replied,  
"My daughter, men are all the same;  
you didn't think they came  
for nothing to a place like this?  
Many activities  
go on to give such men delight;  
there's hide-and-seek by night.  
and merry company by day;  
listen to what I say,  
and carefully remember each  
of seven tricks of speech  
and eight techniques of making love  
for the amusement of  
a willow catkin's patrons, till,  
when they have had their fill,  
she plays with them like pebbles, when*

Vừa tuần nguyệt sáng gương trong,  
Tú bà ghé lại thông dong dẫn dò:  
"Nghề chơi cũng lắm công phu,  
"Làng chơi ta phải biết cho đủ điều".  
Nàng rằng: "Mưa gió dập dùi,  
"Liều thân thì cũng phải liều thế thôi!"  
Mụ rằng: "Ai cũng như ai,  
"Người ta ai mất tiền hoài đến đây?"  
"Ở trong còn lắm điều hay.  
"Nồi dèm khếp mở nồi ngày riêng chung.  
"Này con thuộc lấy làm lòng,  
"Vành ngoài bầy chữ vành trong tám nghề.  
"Chơi cho liễu chán hoa chê,  
"Cho lãn lóc đá cho mê mẩn đời.  
Khi khóe hạnh khi nét ngài,  
"Khi ngấm ngợ nguyệt khi cười cợt hoa.  
"Đều là nghề nghiệp trong nhà,  
"Đù ngàn ấy nét mới là người soi".



*she turns them over, then  
they fall unconscious in her arms!  
You must know how one charms,  
at times with sensuous lips, perchance,  
or with a sideways glance,  
reading erotic verse mean while,  
and sometimes with a smile -  
this is the business of these parts!  
When you have all these arts  
you will be fully qualified!*



*Kieu listened horrified;  
her eyebrows rose, her face inflamed,  
it made her feel ashamed  
merely to hear such words as this.  
What strange calamities  
her life had brought to her of late!  
She wept at such a fate;  
born into the nobility,  
then, still a girl, to be  
apprenticed to this strange trade now.  
"Oh," she complained, "then how  
completely forfeit my good name,  
since I accept this shame!  
Who could fall lower from so high?  
Oh woe is me, for I,  
while lost within filthy place,  
cannot escape disgrace,  
nor yet the hand that hold me, too!*

Gót dầu vâng dạy mấy lời,  
Đường chau nét nguyệt đường phai vẻ hồng.  
Nhưng nghe nói đã thẹn thùng,  
Nước đời lắm nỗi lạ lùng khất khe!  
Xót mình cửa các buồng khuê,  
Vỡ lòng học lấy những nghề nghiệp hay!  
Khéo là mặt dạn mày dày,  
Kiếp người đã đến thế này thì thôi!  
Thương thay thân phận lạc loài,  
Dấu sao cũng ở tay người biết sao?

*From this time on ward, Kieu  
within the bawdy-house behind  
pink curtains was confined.  
The higher rare-jade prices stand,  
the greater the demand;  
so busy butterflies and bees  
swarmed round, till revelries  
succeeded one another for,  
sometimes, a month or more,  
and laughter rang each night till dawn.  
Kieu said farewell each morn  
as some "Song-Yu" left her embrace,  
to welcome in his place  
a "Chang-Ching" in the afternoon,  
becoming very soon  
like leaves that blow in every breeze,  
like branches on the tress  
where any swallow may alight.  
But when the scents of night  
dispersed in dawn's sobriety,  
she saw reality  
and shrank from what she saw, amazed;  
that she, who had been raised  
in silken gowns and rich brocade,  
should now be left to fade  
upon the road, a trampled flower,  
exposed to wind and shower,  
should such a face meet such a fate?*

Lầu xanh mới rủ trướng đào,  
Càng treo giá ngọc càng cao phẩm người.  
Biết bao bướm lả ong lơi,  
Cuộc say đầy tháng trận cười suốt đêm.  
Dập dìu lá gió cành chim,  
Sớm đưa Tống Ngọc tới tìm Trường-khanh.  
Khi tỉnh rượu lúc tàn canh,  
Giật mình, mình lại thương mình xót xa.  
Khi sao phong gấm rủ là,  
Giờ sao tan tác như hoa giữa đường.  
Mặt sao dày gió dạn sương,  
Thân sao bướm chán ong chường bấy thân?  
Mặc người mua Sở mây Tần,  
Những mình nào biết có xuân là gì.  
Đòi phen gió tựa hoa kề,  
Nửa rèm tuyết ngậm bốn bề trăng thâu.  
Cảnh nào cảnh chẳng đeo sầu,  
Người buồn cảnh có vui đâu bao giờ?

*Should such a body sate  
the needs of butterflies and bees?  
Caresses such as these  
by revellers from Chu an Jin  
made Kieu yet feel within  
none of the sweetness love should bring.  
At certain times in spring  
she used to spend her leisure hours  
where breezes blew the flowers,  
or where her paths were patched at night  
with full moon's silver light  
as though half draped eith drifted snow.  
But scenery, although  
so lovely, to a heart which breaks  
can bring no joy, but makes  
sad souls more melancholy still.  
Then sometimes she would fill  
the hours by improvising rhymes,  
or sketching, or at times  
by playing on the lute at night  
beneath the pale moonlight,  
or playing chess beneath the flowers.  
She tried to give her hours  
some gaiety, yet it was forced,  
for who could have discoursed  
with her with proper sympathy?  
Who was there who could be  
a true and understanding friend?*

Đòi phen nét vẽ câu thơ,  
Cung cầm trong nguyệt nước cờ dưới hoa.  
Vui là vui gượng kẻo là,  
Ai tri âm đó mặn mà với ai?  
Thờ ơ gió trúc mưa mai,  
Ngẩn ngơ trăm mối dùi mài một thân.  
Ôm lòng đòi đoạn xa gần,  
Chẳng vò mà rồi chẳng dần mà đau!  
Nhớ ơn chín chữ cao sâu,  
Một ngày một ngả bóng dàu tà tà.  
Dặm nghìn nước thẳm non xa,  
Nghĩ dàu thân phận con ra thế này!  
Sân hòe đôi chút thơ ngây,  
Trán cam ai kẻ đỡ thay việc mình?



*She found that, in the end,  
no poems whispered in the breeze  
among the bamboo trees,  
nor music of the dripping spots  
of rain on apricots,  
could move her sad and weary heart.  
Obsessed by every part  
of what had overturned her ways,  
the vacuum of her days  
was filled by bitter memory.  
But it was agony  
as much to think of what had passed  
as to behold at last,  
the state that she had fallen to.  
Though no one troubled Kieu  
her thoughts were like a tangled skein;  
she felt prostrate with pain  
yet there was none with whom she fought.  
Her parents filled each thought;  
the Labours Nine that were their due  
which she had failed to do;  
in loneliness day after day  
their lives would fade away  
like shadows from the setting sun,  
where once she had begun  
her road, beyond these hills and streams,  
not in their wildest dreams  
would they believe she'd fall so low.*



*Since she had had to go,  
only two green and tender shoots  
were growing from the roots  
of her once-famous family tree;  
how could such children be  
her substitute in all the deeds  
to meet her parents' needs  
that she would wish to carry out?*



*Kieu sadly thought about  
how she had promised Kim her hand;  
"In that far-distant land  
how can he know what wounds my heart?  
Returning, will he start  
to ask about his willow-tree,  
where its green branch might be?  
Now broken, passed from hand to hand!  
Has Thuy-Van, as I planned,  
to prove my faithfulness, been wed  
to Kim-Trong in my stead,  
a flower new-grafted on the tree?  
Her thoughts began to be  
a tangled skein, still more involved  
as scenes of home revolved  
the long night through in all her dreams.*

Nhớ lời nguyện ước ba sinh,  
Xa xôi ai có biết tình chẳng ai?  
Khi về hỏi liễu Chương-dài,  
Cành xuân đã bẻ cho người chuyên tay!  
Tình sâu mong trả nghĩa dày,  
Hoa kia đã chấp cành này chỗ chưa?  
Mối tình đời đoạn vô tơ,  
Giấc hương quan luống lẫn mơ cành dài.

*"How lonely now it seems  
behind silk curtains here to lie  
beneath this foreign sky".  
Gold dusk became the golden dawn  
of each successive morn;  
the sun and moon arose in turn.  
"Oh, Heaven is so stern."  
Kieu murmured, thinking gloomily  
of maids in misery;  
he raises us and makes us fair,  
then down to deep despair  
he plunges us to pay for it.  
Each fair maid must submit  
to drink the cup of shame and strife  
at least once in her life  
before harsh Heaven pities her".*

Song sa vò võ phương trời,  
Nay hoàng hôn đã lại mai hoàng.  
Lần lần thả bạc ác vàng.  
Xót người trong hội đoạn trường đòi cơn.  
Đã cho lấy chữ hồng nhan.  
Làm cho cho hại cho tàn cho cân!  
Đã dầy vào kiếp phong trần.  
Sao cho sĩ nhục một lần mới thôi!

\*



*One day a customer  
named Thuc-Ky-Tam enquired for Kieu.  
a man belonging to  
and educated family  
whose home was in Wuxi  
in Hangzhou province, near Shanghai.  
To open up nearby  
a trading house, there in Yixian  
he had arrived just then  
together with his father, an  
extremely strict, stern man;  
and when the young man heard straightway  
what people used to say  
about this "Queen of Flowers" Kieu,  
he soon proceeded to  
Tu-Ba's well-known establishment,  
and, on arrival, sent  
his rose-pink calling-card to Kieu;  
but when admitted to  
her perfumed chamber's curtained place,  
and seated face to face,  
at once the young man fell in love  
with all the beauty of  
her manners and her graceful form.  
It seemed the worse the storm  
of life, the more her grace shone through,  
as in spring rains, the new  
camellia bloom grows yet more bright.*

Khách du bồng có một người,  
Kỳ Lâm họ Thúc cũng nòi thư hương.  
Vốn người huyện Tích châu Thường,  
Theo nghiêm đường mở ngôi hàng Lâm-tri  
Hoa khói mộ tiếng Kiều nhi,  
Thiếp hồng tìm đến hương khuê gởi vào.  
Trưởng tổ giáp mặt hoa đào,  
Ve nào chẳng mặt nét nào chẳng ưa?  
Hải đường mơn mớn cành tơ,  
Ngày xuân càng gió càng mưa càng nóng!  
Nguyệt hoa hoa nguyệt nảo nùng,  
Đêm xuân ai dễ cầm lòng được chẳng!  
Lạ gì thanh khí lễ hàng,  
Một dây một buộc ai giằng cho ra?  
Sớm đào tối mạn lán la,  
Trước còn trắng gió sau ra đá vàng.

*Like moon-flowers in the night  
which in the moonlight come to flower  
their passion grew each hour,  
what else could lovers do in spring?*

*This was no wondrous thing,  
for love is one of nature's laws;  
its bonds hold for this cause;  
by willing choice they have been tied.*

*The lovers therefore tried  
to keep in contact from then on,  
exchanging plums each morn  
and peaches in the evening.*

*Their love, as light a thing  
at first as moonlight or the breeze  
developed by degrees  
until as solid as a stone.*

*As if Fate would condone  
their furtive meetings nonetheless,  
some sudden business  
recalled Thuc's father to Wuxi;  
the young man seemed to be  
beside himself when told thereof,  
and ten times more in love.  
Spring days arrived: he spent them all  
in answering love's call;  
at times they both enjoyed the breeze  
upon the balconies,  
or on the terrace, watched the moon  
and tasted wine, then soon  
competed at completing rhymes;  
they sat - how many times!  
and side by side breathed scents of dawn,  
remaining all the morn  
until at noon they savoured tea;  
they played chess frequently,  
or played duets upon the lute;  
now, only the pursuit  
of pleasure would their time engross.  
As they became more close  
still stronger yet their passion grew;  
how strange the power of Kieu  
whose beauty could subvert a state!  
Thuc, growing profligate  
spent thousands just to laugh with her;*

Dịp đầu may mắn lạ đường,  
Lại vừa gặp khoảng xuân đường lại quê.  
Sinh càng một tính mười mề,  
Ngày xuân lắm lúc đi về với xuân.  
Khi gió gác khi trăng sân,  
Bầu tiên chuốc rượu câu thần nói thơ  
Khi hương sớm khi trà trưa,  
Bàn vây điểm nước đường tơ họa đàn.  
Miệt mài trong cuộc truy hoan,  
Càng quen thuộc nét càng đan dẫu tình.  
Lạ cho cái sống khuyh thành,  
Làm cho đó quán xiêu đình như chơi.  
Thức sinh quen nét bốc rồi,  
Trăm nghìn đó một trận cười như không!  
Mụ càng tỏ lực chuốt hồng,  
Máu tham hề thấy hơi đồng thì mề.

*and Tu-Ba would confer  
increased attention on her guest -  
she could, by greed obsessed,  
get drunk upon the smell of gold!*



*The nightingales notes rolled  
 around beneath the moonlit sky,  
 proclaiming summer nigh;  
 and in a corner of the gloom  
 a pomegranate's bloom  
 was like a flaming, fiery flower  
 Kieu chose a leisure hour  
 to take a bath in sweet perfume  
 within her curtained room;  
 her body shone within the shade,  
 translucent as pure jade,  
 a masterpiece of statuary  
 as white as ivory;  
 and Thuc by chance perceived her there.  
 Moved by such beauty rare  
 he wrote a poem in classic style;  
 Kieu read it, and said, "While  
 I do appreciate the fact  
 that love inspired this act -  
 your verses like a rich brocade,  
 your words like pearls and jade -  
 and though my talent is far worse,  
 I should compose some verse  
 based on those rhymes as a reply,  
 but thoughts of times gone by  
 when once before I played that game  
 bring back a sense of shame;  
 my heart floats on a cloud of gold*



Dưới trăng quỳên đã gọi hè,  
Đầu tường lửa lập lòe dăm bông.  
Buồng the phải buổi thong dong,  
Thang lan rủ bức trướng hồng tẩm hoa  
Rõ màu trong ngọc trắng ngà,  
Dày dày sẵn đúc một tòa thục nhơn.  
Sinh càng tỏ nét càng khôn,  
Ngủ tình tay thảo một thiên lục Đường.  
Nàng rằng: "Vàng biết lòng chàng,  
"Lời lời châu ngọc hồng hồng giấu thêu.  
"Hay hèn lẽ cũng nói điều,  
"Nỗi quê nghĩ một hai điều ngang ngang  
"Lòng còn gởi áng mây Hằng,  
"Họa vắn, xin hãy chịu chàng hôm nay".  
Rằng: "Sao nói lạ lùng thay!  
"Cảnh kia chẳng phải cõi này mà ra?"  
Nàng càng ú dột thu ba,  
Đoạn trường lúc ấy nghĩ mà buồn tênh:

*to where I dwelt of old  
there in my homeland far away;  
excuse me, please, today,  
from writing verse as a reply;  
"Your words are puzzling; why -  
weren't you born her, as I supposed?"  
The question Thuc had posed  
made Kieu still sadder, as she thought  
about her lot, distraught,  
she could not hide her misery.  
"A flower torn from a tree,  
not worth the time," Said Kieu, "am I  
that you, the butterfly  
spend pleasure seeking, hovering.  
Besides, when it was spring  
you chose a Queen to rule the May;  
why waste the fleeting day  
with lengthy wooing speeches now?  
Since first we met, I vow  
my thoughts have been sincere". Thuc said:  
"and so, before the confluence,  
I must enquire of whence  
your river flows, and sound its deeps".*

"Thiếp như hoa đã lìa cành,  
"Chàng như con bướm lượn vành mà chơi.  
"Chúa xuân dành đã có nơi,  
"Ngăn ngày thôi chớ dài lời làm chi!"  
Sinh rằng: "Từ thuở tương tri,  
"Tám riêng. riêng những nặng vì nước non.  
"Trăm năm tính cuộc vòng tròn,  
"Phải dò cho đến ngọn nguồn lạch sông".

*"Your constant kindness keeps  
me ever grateful", answered Kieu,  
but if I went with you,  
think of the trouble I should bring.  
The first disturbing thing  
is that for so long I've dwelt  
in this notorious belt  
of houses of iniquity;  
in fact, in loving me,  
you only love a gilded flower,  
is it within your power  
to keep the promises you've made  
when paint and perfume fade ?  
Will your heart then be constant yet?  
The second, don't forget,  
is that you once made marriage vows  
to one who rules your house  
and tends your rows of cinnamon;  
when you have married one  
it splits your loving and your life  
to take a second wife.  
A duckweed in a pond am I  
and you the cloud on high  
whose image met it in the lake;  
why let the ripples shake  
your marriage's serenity?  
If you were wed to me  
a hundred troubles might ensue,*

Nàng rằng: "Muôn đời ơn lòng,  
"Chút e bên thú bên tông để dấu.  
"Bình-khang nán nã bấy lâu,  
"Yêu hoa yêu được một màu điểm trang.  
"Rời ra lại phấn phai hương,  
"Lòng kia giữ được thường thường mãi chăng?  
"Va trong thêm quế cung trăng,  
"Chú trương đành đã chị Hằng ở trong  
"Bấy lâu khăng khít dài đồng,  
"Thêm người, người cũng chia lòng riêng tày  
"Về chi chút phận bèo mây,  
"Làm cho bể ái khi đầy khi vơi  
"Trăm điều ngang ngửa vì tôi,  
"Thần sau ai chịu tôi trời ấy cho?  
"Như chàng có vững tay co,  
"Mười phần cũng đắp điểm cho một vài  
"Thế trong dù lớn hơn ngoài,  
"Trước hơn" sự từ gởi người dang la

*and then hereafter, who  
would suffer Heaven's punishment?*

*In this predicament  
you might protect me, sir, from harm,  
had you a powerful arm,  
but if your wife is, of the two,  
more masterful than you,  
I should be as if placed before  
the open, hungry maw  
of a man-eating lioness!*

*Must I, in my distress  
creep like a vine beneath your roof,  
and humbly take reproof  
as a mere servant in your house?*

*If so, ruled by your spouse,  
then her corrosive jealousy  
would be far worse for me  
than an iron furnace to go through.*

*There is your father, too;  
is his heart big enough to look  
with pity, not rebuke  
upon a wayside willow-tree  
or wild-flower, such as me?  
Or, when he hears what I have been  
then would he not demean  
me more, if he should chose to send  
me back again to spend  
my time in brothels once again?*

"Cúi đầu lườn xuống mái nhà,  
"Giám chua lại tội bằng ba lửa nòng.  
"Ở trên còn có nhà thông,  
"Lượng trên trông xuống biết lòng có thương?  
"Sá chi liễu ngô hoa tường,  
"Lầu xanh lại bỏ ra phường lầu xanh!  
"Lại càng dơ đáng đại hình,  
"Đành thân phận thiếp ngại danh giá chàng.  
"Thương sao cho vẹn thì thương,  
"Tính sao cho trọn mọi đường thì vàng".  
Sinh rằng: "Hay nói dè chừng,  
"Lòng đây lòng đấy chưa từng hay sao?  
"Đường xa chớ ngại Ngổ Lào,  
"Trăm điều hãy cứ trông vào một ta.  
"Đã gần chi có điều xa  
"Đá vàng đã quyết phong ba cũng liều!"

*For me, I'd not complain,  
 should cruel Fate ordain that way,  
 I count for nought today;  
 but for your reputation, dear.  
 I am assailed by fear;  
 take care no trouble comes to you  
 because of love for Kieu -  
 but if you'll talk with everyone  
 so that no harm is done -  
 all right, I'll do as you command.*

*"Do we not understand  
 each other's hearts by now?" asked Thuc,  
 "You really seem to look  
 for problems, there's no need for fear  
 really on me, my dear ,  
 don't fret, we shall not need to go  
 to Laos or Wu, you know!  
 We are too close now, you and me,  
 to think of what might be;  
 Now then, we will do what I say  
 and marry, come what may,  
 and face whatever tempests roar! "*



That they might reassure  
each other of their settled wills,  
they called on streams and hills  
to witness every solemn vow;  
the night would not allow  
them time to pour out all their mind;  
they noticed that behind  
the western mountain-chain outside  
the moon began to hide  
her shining looking-glass.  
Saying they wished to pass  
a while enjoying cooler air  
out in the garden, where  
a summerhouse stood, of bamboo,  
Thuc then escaped with Kieu  
and did her safely for a while.  
He planned, if not by guile,  
by violence if need be then,  
to seek release again  
and have the one he loved set free  
at once, and legally,  
for ever from this house of shame.  
To help him reach this aim  
he had a clever man impart  
to Tu-Ba, for a start,  
the news of what he planned to do.  
The old procuress knew  
that she had met her match at last.

Cùng nhau cần vận đến điều,  
Chỉ non thề bẻ nặng gieo đến lời.  
Ní non dèm ngăn tình dài,  
Ngoài hiên thỏ đã non đoài ngậm gương.  
Mượn điều trúc viện thừa lương,  
Rước về hầy tạm dấu nàng một nơi.  
Chiến hòa, sắp sẵn hai bài,  
Cậy tay thầy thợ mượn người dò la.  
Bắn tin đến mặt Tú bà,  
Thua cơ, mụ cũng cầu hòa dám sao!  
Rõ ràng của dẫn tay trao,  
Hoàn lương một thiếp thân vào cửa công.

*Ignoring what had passed,  
and much preferring making peace,  
she thought it time to cease  
resisting, so she made a deed,  
receiving an agreed  
cash compensation in return  
for what poor Kieu could earn,  
and signed her over to Thuc's care  
before the lawyers there,  
which all thought satisfactory.*

*So Kieu was now as free  
as an immortal soul at last,  
escaped when life is past,  
out of this world of misery.  
And so, both Thuc and she  
felt as if life began again;  
inseparable, then,  
like clinging vine around a tree  
bound up in unity  
by old cords which had been renewed;  
a bond of gratitude  
she felt as deep as ocean's tide,  
the love too, on his side,  
was endless as a flowing stream.  
There was a brighter gleam,  
now to the jade; the lotus bloom  
had subtler, sweet perfume;  
it seemed as if their love became  
like a fierce fire, whose flame  
grew hotter still the more it burned.*

Công tư hai lẽ đều xong,  
Gót tiên phút đã thoát vòng trần ai.  
Một nhà sum họp trúc mai.  
Càng sâu nghĩa bể càng dài tình sóng.  
Hương càng được lửa càng nồng.  
Càng sôi vẻ ngọc càng lồng màu sen.

*A few green leaves had turned  
to yellow on the courtyard tree;  
a six-months' rhapsody  
the lovers had together spent;  
berries were evident,  
scarlet upon the autumn hedge;  
when, sitting on the edge  
of his well-padded saddle-frame.  
Thuc's merchant father came  
back home again, from journeying.  
Upon discovering  
how Thuc, he thought, had gone astray  
while he had been away,  
his rage was indescribable.  
He told the sorrowful  
young man he must indeed be mad,  
not to foresee the bad  
results that would from this ensue,  
and ordered that the two  
young lovers should be wrenched apart,  
and Thuc should send his tart  
back to her bawdy-house again!  
Thuc plucked up courage then;  
this categorical command  
stung him to make a stand  
and try to talk his father round:  
"Dear Father, my profound  
transgression I indeed admit,*

Nửa năm hơi tiếng vừa quen,  
Sàn gỗ cảnh biếc đã chen lá vàng  
Giàu thu vừa nảy giò sương,  
Gò yên đã thấy xuân đường đến nơi  
Phong lời nói trăn bời bời,  
Nặng lòng e ấp tỉnh bài phân chia.  
Quyết ngay biện bạch một bề,  
Dạy cho má phấn lại về lầu xanh!  
Thấy lời nghiêm huan rành rành,  
Đánh liều, sinh mới lấy tình nài ken  
Rằng "Con biết tội đã nhiều,  
"Đầu răng sam sét bữa riu cũng cam  
"Trot vì tay đã nhúng chàm,  
"Đại rồi còn biết khôn làm sao dãi!  
"Cùng nhau va tiếng một ngày  
"Ôm cầm ai hỡ dứt dây cho đành  
"Lượng trên quyết chẳng thương tình,  
"Bạc đen thời có tiếc mình làm chi!"

*and so I will submit  
to any punishment you set.  
But now that I have let  
my hands be stained with telltale dye,  
no matter how I try  
the stain will not come off again.  
I have been foolish - then  
I can't grow wise just when you say.  
Had it been but one day  
that we had lived as man and wife,  
then never in my life  
could I be such a cruel brute  
as to destroy the lute  
which once I held within my hands.  
If your hard heart withstands  
my pleas, I would give up my life  
far rather than my wife;  
so, black or white, do what you please.*



*Such stubborn words as these  
wore out the old man's self-restraint;  
he lodged a strong complaint  
at once with the authorities.*

*The sheriff hearing this,  
cried out with rage, and straight away  
he sent a writ to say  
the lovers must appear in court.*

*His constables soon brought  
the couple to the sheriffs yard;  
they saw the judge's hard  
expression and his steely frown  
as they fell prostrate down  
till his enquiries should begin.*

*You there! the mandarin  
began, with some display of might  
to give poor Thuc a fright,  
you are a good-for-nothing churl!*

*And as for you, my girl,  
you are a wretch, a withered flower,  
a scent spent in an hour,  
have you no sense of your disgrace  
when, by a painted face,  
you have deceived this simpleton?*

*The wrongs that you have done  
according to the plaintiffs suit  
without doubt constitute  
a very complex case indeed;*

Thấy lời sắt đá tri tri,  
Sốt gan, ông mới cáo quỳ cửa công.  
Đất bằng nổi sóng dùng dùng,  
Phủ đường sai lá phiếu hồng thôi tra.  
Cùng nhau theo gót sai nha,  
Song song vào trước sân hoa lay quỳ.  
Trông lên mặt sắt đen sì,  
Lập nghiêm trước đã ra uy nặng lời:  
"Gã kia đại nết chơi bời,  
"Mà con người thế là người đơng dơ!"  
"Tuồng chi hoa thái lương thừa,  
"Mượn màu son phấn đánh lừa con đen.  
"Suy trong tình trạng nguyên đơn,  
"Bề nào thì cũng chưa yên bề nào.  
"Phép công chiếu án luận vào,  
"Có hai đường ấy, muốn sao mặc mình:  
Một là cứ phép gia hình,  
"Một là lại cứ lâu xanh phỏ về!"

*and so I have decreed  
two equitable, fair and just  
solutions, and you must  
select whichever one you would.  
The first is that you should  
endure the legal punishment;  
the second: to be sent  
back to your bawdy-house anew!*

*"My mind's made up", said Kieu.  
 "Never again shall I be caught  
 within the web I've wrought,  
 a body, whether good or ill  
 remains a body still;  
 though I am frail, yet even so  
 I'd rather undergo  
 the punishment laid down by law".  
 "Beat her for being a whore!  
 the mandarin snarled savagely.  
 To whip this peony  
 they used three canes bound into one.  
 Resigned to what was done,  
 Kieu never said a single word;  
 not one complaint was heard;  
 of cruel Fate she did not speak.  
 Pale grew her peachlike cheek;  
 her eyebrows lost their native curve;  
 from far, Thuc could observe  
 her body sprawling in the dust;  
 it never was robust;  
 and seemed a shattered mirror there;  
 he could not now forebear  
 to speak his pity for his bride.  
 "Oh, unjust fate!" he cried,  
 "that through my fault she suffers so!  
 She would not undergo  
 all this had she persuaded me,*

Nàng rằng: "Đã quyết một bề,  
"Nhện này vương lấy tơ kia mấy lần!  
"Đục trong thân cũng là thân,  
"Yếu thơ vâng chịu trước sân loi đình".  
Dạy rằng: "Cứ phép gia hình!"  
Ba cây chập lại một cành mẫu đơn.  
Phận dành chi dám kêu oan,  
Đào hoen quện má liễu tan tác mây.  
Một sân lăm cát đã đầy,  
Gương lơ nước thủy mai gầy vóc sương.  
Nghĩ tình chàng Thúc mà thương,  
Nẻo xa trông thấy lòng càng xót xa.  
Khóc rằng: "Oan khốc vì ta,  
"Có nghe lời trước chẳng đà lụy sau.  
"Cạn lòng chẳng biết nghĩ sâu,  
"Để ai trăng tủi hoa sầu vì ai?"  
Phủ đường nghe thoảng vào tai,  
Động lòng lại gạn đến lời riêng tây.

*I was too blind to see  
that this would be the consequence  
of my heart's lack of sense;  
I, O my love, and only I  
have set your life awry  
and turned its flowers to pain and shame!*

*His lamentations came  
unwitting to the judge's ears,  
who, moved to hear his tears,  
called him and asked him to explain;*

*Thuc sobbed the tale again  
from their first meeting up till now.*

*"She knew beforehand how  
our love would one day end", he said;*

*"I, only I, have led  
her into this - mine is the blame!"*

Sự sù, chàng mới thưa ngay,  
Đầu đuôi kể lại sự ngày cầu thần:  
"Nàng đã tính hết xa gần,  
"Từ xưa nàng đã biết thần có rày!  
"Tại tôi húng lấy một tay,  
"Để nàng cho đến nỗi này vì tôi!"

*The mandarin became  
less stern on hearing Thuc confess;  
he felt sincere distress,  
and tried to help the pair escape  
out of their present scrape,  
giving advice on what to do:  
"If what you say is true",  
he said to Thuc, "then I suppose  
that you would say she knows  
how to behave as someone's wife  
in spite of her past life  
with all its false frivolity?"  
"Poor, humble though she be,  
her brush is not untalented".  
Laughing at what Thuc said,  
the mandarin cried "Is that so ?  
Well, so that we may know,  
let her compose a poem, then,"  
Kieu took the fine brush-pen  
and writing-paper, improvised  
some verses as advised,  
then showed them to the mandarin.  
"More beauty is herein  
than in the whole Tang dynasty !"  
he cried in ecstasy:  
"What priceless talent and what grace!  
With such a charming face  
together with a cultured mind,*



Nghe lời nói cũng thương lời,  
Đẹp ụy mới dạy cho bài giai vi  
Rằng "Nhu hấn có thế thì,  
"Trăng hoa song cũng thị phi biết điều!"  
Sinh rằng "Chút phận bọt bèo,  
"Theo dôi va cũng ít nhiều bút nguên"  
Cười rằng: "Đã thế thì nên,  
"Mộc già, hãy thử một thềm trình nghe"  
Nàng vang cái bút tay đề,  
Tiền hoa trình trước án phê xem tường  
Khen rằng: "Giá đáng Thịnh Đường,  
"Tài nay sắc ấy nghìn vàng chưa cần"  
"Thực là tài nữ giai nhân,  
"Chân Trần còn có Chau Trần nào hơn!"  
"Thôi đừng rước dữ cầu hôn,  
"Làm chi lỗ nhíp chó đàn ngang cung,  
"Đã đưa đến trước cửa công,  
"Ngoài thì là lý song trong là tình  
"Đâu con trong đạo gia đình,  
"Thôi thì đẹp nổi bất bình là xong!"

*strict parents couldn't find  
a better match to wed their son!  
Come now, old man, have done;  
the discord when you fume and fret  
disturbs the pure duet  
they harmonise on well-tuned lutes.*

*To one who prosecutes,  
in public I must speak of law;  
but privately I'm more  
concerned with what I feel is just.*

*You son, old man, you must  
remember, will remain beside  
your hearthstone with his bride;  
come, all of you, forgive, shake hands!*

*He promptly gave commands  
that they be wed officially;  
at once, what did they see  
but fine, flower-decked palanquin,  
preceded by a din  
of music played on pipe and drum,  
all hurrying to come,  
swift as the wind, along the road.*

*Red flaming torches glowed  
like galaxies, each one a star.*

*The party went as far  
as the pink-curtained bridal bed,  
when Thuc and Kieu were wed,  
to celebrate their union.*

Kíp truyền sấm sửa lễ công,  
Kiệu hoa cất gió duốc hồng điểm sao.  
Bầy hàng cố xúy xôn xao,  
Song song đưa tới trướng đào sánh đôi.  
Thương vì hạnh trọng vì tài,  
Thúc ông thôi cũng đẹp lời phong ba.  
Huê lan sức nức một nhà,  
Tình cay đắng lại mặn mà hơn xưa.

*The old man had begun  
to see Kieu's worth, and stormed no more;  
and now, just as before,  
the orchids' and tube-roses' scent  
filled each room where they went;  
affliction past, love knew no bounds.*

*Absorbed in endless rounds  
of morning wine and chess at noon  
they did not see that soon  
green lotus leaves had sprung to birth,  
peach blossom fell to earth;  
a year of wedded bliss had passed.*

*One quiet night at last  
together in Thuc's library,  
Kieu told him anxiously;  
Since your strong, firm liana-vine  
was intertwined with mine,  
swallows have given place to geese.*

*There has been a decrease  
in letters from your family.  
Too much in love with me,  
your second wife - such love betrays  
your "wife of riceless days"  
your first, whom you've neglected so.  
Like rippling waves, you know,  
effects of every action spread;  
if she heard you had wed,  
who'd save us then from what occurred?*

*Moreover I have heard  
with how great rectitude your spouse  
rules and directs your house,  
with what high principles she talks  
I fear a soul who walks  
with more than normal righteousness,*

Máng vui rượu sớm cờ trita,  
Đào đà phai thắm sen vừa nảy xanh.  
Trướng hồ vắng vẻ đêm thanh,  
E tình nàng mới bày tình riêng chung:  
"Phận bồ từ vẹn chữ tòng,  
"Đổi thay nhận yến đã hồng đây niên.  
"Tin nhà ngày một vắng tin,  
"Mặn tình cát lữ lạt tình tao khang.  
"Nghĩ ra thật cũng nên đường,  
"Tăm hơi ai dễ giữ giàng cho ta?  
"Trộm nghe kẻ lớn trong nhà.  
"Ở vào khuôn phép nói ra mỗi giường.  
"E thay những dạ phi thường.  
"Để dò rốn bể khôn lường đáy sông!  
"Mà ta suốt một năm ròng,  
"Thế nào cũng chẳng giấu xong được nào.  
"Bấy chầy chưa tỏ tiêu hao,  
"Hoặc là trong có làm sao chẳng là?

*who can be fathomed less  
than one can sound an ocean-deep!  
No longer can we keep  
the secret of our married life;  
the silence of your wife,  
since we were wed, without a doubt,  
suggests she has found out  
and plans to take revenge some day.  
Go home without delay  
to please your wife and bring me news  
about her present views;  
and why delay to let her know?  
Why hide our love, as though  
you hadn't yet made up your mind?*

*"Xin chàng kíp liệu lại nhà,  
"Trước người đẹp ý sau ta biết tình.  
"Đêm ngày giữ mực giấu quanh,  
"Rày lẫn mai lửa như hình chưa thông!"*



Thuc, gratified to find  
her tolerant in her advice  
decided in a trice  
to travel to his native land.  
The journey that he planned  
he told his father of next day,  
who warned against delay  
and fixed farewell festivities.  
One moment, all was bliss;  
the next, came parting of the ways,  
where blue before their gaze  
the river's ribbon lay unrolled.  
The lovers could behold  
the weeping willows ranged in ranks  
upon the water's banks;  
each looked into the other's eyes,  
and hand in hand, with sighs,  
a farewell cup of wine they drank.  
Their hearts within them sank;  
Kieu's words seemed strangles in her throat;  
"High mountains and remote  
ravines will separate us now";  
she sighed, "so please allow  
your wife her rights, that she may yet  
be tolerant, and let  
your concubine remain in peace.  
A casual watcher sees,  
but hardly notices at all,

Nghe lời khuyên nhủ thong dong,  
Đành lòng sinh mới quyết lòng hồi trang.  
Rạng ra gỏi đến xuân đường,  
Thúc ông cũng vội giục chàng ninh gia.  
Tiễn đưa một chén quan hà,  
Xuân đình thoát đã đổi ra cao đình.  
Sóng Tần một dải xanh xanh,  
Loi thoi bờ liễu mấy cành Dương-quan.  
Cầm tay dài ngắn thở than,  
Chia phối ngừng chén hợp tan nghẹn lời.  
Nàng rằng: "Non nước xa khơi,  
"Sao cho trong ấm thì ngoài mới êm.  
"Để lừa yếm thắm tròn kim,  
"Làm chi bùng mắt bắt chim khó lòng!  
Đôi ta chút nghĩa dèo bông,  
"Đến nhà trước liệu nổi sông cho mình.  
"Dù khi sóng gió bất tình,  
"Lớn ra uy lớn tôi đành phận tôi.  
"Hơn điều giấu ngược giấu xuôi,  
"Lại mang những việc tày trời đến sau.

though it may not be small,  
a scarlet bodice hung to dry;  
but the much sharper eye  
of seamstresses can clearly see,  
minute though it may be,  
a tiny needle's eye straightway.  
Your wife's not going to play  
at catching birds with blindfold eyes;  
why then should you disguise  
our temporary love-affair?  
As soon as you are there  
please tell your wife all that has passed;  
then if a stormy blast  
of wrath disturbs your married calm,  
give her, without a qualm,  
her station as your only wife;  
I will accept what life  
she chooses to assign to me;  
for surely that would be  
much better than to hide our game,  
but store up, just the same,  
more trouble for some future day.  
Listen to what I say,  
a year is shorter than it seems;  
remember in your dreams  
the farewell cup we two drank here,  
then, on this day next year,  
we'll drink to welcome your return.

*"Thương nhau xin nhớ lời nhau,  
"Năm chầy cũng chẳng đi đâu mà chầy.  
"Chén đưa nhớ bữa hôm nay,  
"Chén mừng xin đợi ngày này năm sau!"*

*Thuc, slow and taciturn,  
mounted his horse and rode away,  
as though one, as they say,  
had ripped a collar from a gown.  
The russet and the brown  
of distant woods of maple trees  
seemed like a background frieze,  
new-painted by the autumn sun  
in colours drab and dun  
to symbolise their parting woe,  
towards which, sad and slow,  
the horseman rode in robes of rust,  
wreathed in red clouds of dust,  
and slowly disappeared from sight,  
Kieu spent a lonely night  
while Thuc rode endlessly; but who  
had split the moon in two  
that half its beams fell on her bed,  
while half of them were shed  
upon the land he travelled through?  
What good, though, would it do  
to tell what happened on his way?  
No, rather let us say  
a word about his legal wife.  
Hoan-Thu began her life  
as a distinguished statesman's child;  
the wind of fortune smiled  
which blew her argosy toward*

Người lên ngựa kẻ chia bào,  
Rừng phong thu đã nhuộm màu quan san.  
Đậm hồng bụi cuốn chinh an,  
Trông người đã khuất mấy ngàn dâu xanh.  
Người về chiếc bóng năm canh,  
Kẻ đi muôn dặm một mình xa xôi.  
Vàng trăng ai sẽ làm đôi,  
Nửa in gối chiếc nửa soi dặm trường!

\*

Kể chi những nỗi dọc đường,  
Buồng trong này nỗi chủ trương ở nhà:  
Vốn dòng họ Hoạn danh gia,  
Con quan Lại bộ tên là Hoạn thư.  
Duyên Đắc thuận nẻo gió đưa,  
Cùng chàng kết tóc xe tơ những ngày.  
Ở ăn thì nét cũng hay,  
Nói điều ràng buộc thì tay cũng già.  
Từ nghe vườn mới thêm hoa,  
Miệng người đã lẩm tin nhà thì không.

*that haven where she moored  
her craft for good: the home of Thuc.*

*In all she undertook  
her manners were beyond reproach,  
and no one could approach  
her brilliance in argument.*

*From information sent  
from many quarters, she assumed  
another flower had bloomed  
within the matrimonial bed -  
so everybody said;  
from Thuc himself she never heard.*

*And yet, it was absurd!  
The more she tried to smother it  
the more the fire she lit  
of jealousy blazed in her breast.*

*Lửa tâm càng dập càng nồng,  
Trách người đen bạc ra lòng trắng hoa:  
"Vị bằng thú thật cùng ta,  
"Cũng dung kẻ dưới mới là lượng trên.  
"Đại chi chẳng giữ lấy nền,  
"Tốt chi mà rước tiếng ghen vào mình?*



*"If he had just confessed -  
the fickle and unfaithful wretch -  
I should have let him fetch  
his trollop home without a fuss,  
and let her live with us  
to show my magnanimity",  
she muttered angrily,  
I'm not so stupid as to smear  
my reputation here  
and be a slave to jealousy.  
But to conceal from me  
and cover up his naughtiness -  
what stupid childishness!  
Because I live so far from there  
the news of their affair,  
they hope, could never filter through.  
Well, I'll plot secrets too!  
Why let trifle shake me up?  
Like ants inside a cup  
I'll play with them; they'll not get free!  
I'll see that when they see  
each other, they will look away!  
I'll see that she shall stay  
for ever in a menial place!  
I'll put them face to face  
to show him as a stupid goat*

"Lại còn bưng bít dấu quanh,  
"Làm chi những thói trẻ ranh nực cười!  
"Tính rằng cách mặt khuất lời,  
"Giấu ta, ta cũng liệu bài giấu cho!  
"Lo gì việc ấy mà lo,  
"Kiến trong miệng chén có bò đi đâu?  
"Làm cho nhìn chẳng được nhau.  
"Làm cho đầy đoạ cái đầu chẳng lên!  
"Làm cho trông thấy nhãn tiền,  
"Cho người thăm ván bán thuyền biết tay".  
Nỗi lòng kín chẳng ai hay,  
Ngoài tai để mặc gió bay mái ngoài.  
Tuần sau bỗng thấy hai người,  
Mách tin ý cũng liệu bài tăng công.  
Tiểu thư nổi giận dùng dùng:  
"Góm tay thêu dệt ra lòng treu người!  
"Chồng tao nào phải như ai,  
"Điều này hẳn miệng những người thị phi!"

*who'd try to sell a boat  
before he's even cut the wood.  
She alone understood  
what cruel revenge she did intend;  
her plan was to pretend  
to disbelieve each gossipper;  
two women came to her  
with news about her husband's deed,  
expecting this would lead  
to their receiving some reward.  
But angrily she roared;  
I hate these creatures who invent  
such stories with intent  
to stir me up to jealousy.  
My husband certainly  
is not like all those other men;  
each evil gossip then  
is really talking through her hat!  
She then gave orders that  
her servants box the ears of one,  
and, after that was done,  
should break the other gossip's teeth.  
Not even underneath  
their breaths would friend or neighbour dare  
to mention Thuc's affair,  
on seeing such stern punishment.*

Vội vàng xuống lệnh ra uy,  
Đứa thì vả miệng đứa thì bé răng.  
Trong ngoài kín mít như bung,  
Nào ai còn dám nói năng một lời!  
Buồng đào khuya sớm thành thơ,  
Ra vào một mực nói cười như không.

*Smilingly, Hoan-Thu went  
about her business normally,  
but meanwhile, in wardly  
by day and night her fury burned.*

At last young Thuc returned,  
dismounting right before her room,  
What writer would presume  
to say what wife of husband felt  
when, after they had dwelt  
so long apart he now returned?  
They each appeared concerned  
with how the other's health had been;  
their passion seemed more keen  
because they were no more apart;  
to speak, though, of the heart -  
just what their hearts felt, who could guess?  
Thuc tried without success  
to guess his wife's most private thought,  
believing that he ought  
to make confession of his deed;  
before he could succeed,  
however, she would interrupt,  
laugh, and make an abrupt  
change in the subject; thus he got  
no hint at all of what  
she knew about his love affair.  
This shows with what great care  
I corked the bottle, chuckled Thuc,  
then what a fool I'd look  
confessing without questioning!  
So, after balancing  
the pros and cons, he held his peace,  
lest all the forest trees  
should tremble if he shook one vine.

Đêm ngày lòng những dặn lòng,  
Sinh đà về đến lầu hồng xuống yên.  
Lời tan hợp nổi hàn huyền,  
Chữ tình càng mặn chữ duyên càng nồng.  
Tẩy trần vui chén thông dong,  
Nổi lòng ai ở trong lòng mà ra.  
Chàng về xem ý tú nhà,  
Sự mình cũng rắp lân la giải bày.  
Một phen cười nói tình say,  
Tóc tơ bát động mây may sự tình.  
Nghĩ đà bưng kín miệng bình,  
Nào ai có khảo mà mình lại xưng?  
Những là e ấp dùng dằng,  
Rút dây sợ nữa động rừng lại thôi.  
Có khi vui chuyện mua cười,  
Tiểu thư lại giờ những lời đầu đầu.  
Rằng: "Trong ngọc đá vàng thau,  
"Mười phần ta đã tin nhau cả mười."

*At times she would design  
some way to drop a casual, dark  
provocative remark  
into their happy raillery;  
We know, don't you agree,  
how to distinguish jade from quartz,  
gem stones from other sorts?  
We trust each other utterly.  
So, whereas I can see  
that some folk, to their credit, may  
well gossip night and day  
of "drones who flit like butterflies",  
I would have been unwise  
to think of you suspiciously -  
why, now you're home, I'd be  
the laughing-stock of every friend!  
Deciding to pretend  
to take this as a casual joke,  
when Thuc replied, he spoke  
in tones of equanimity,  
preferring pleasantry  
to questions which could lead to strife.  
He gaily wooed his wife;  
hours of togetherness they passed,  
mingling their shadows, cast  
by lamp's light late or midnight moon.  
The young man very soon  
grew fond of dining on a dish  
of home-grown herbs and fish;  
trapped by the spell the country weaves.*



"Khen cho những miệng đông dài,  
"Bướm ong lại đặt những lời nọ kia!  
"Thiếp dù vụng chẳng hay suy,  
"Đã dơ bụng nghĩ lại bìa miệng cười!"  
Thấy lời thùng thỉnh như chơi,  
Thuận lời chàng cũng nói xuôi dõ dòn.  
Những là cười phấn cợt son,  
Đèn khuya chung bóng trăng tròn sánh vai.

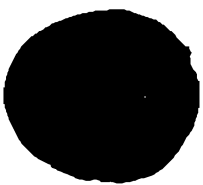
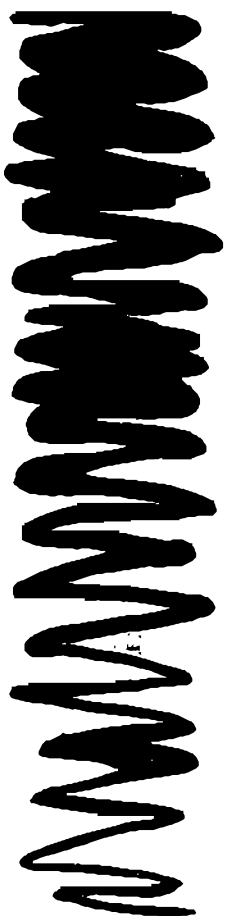
*But golden autumn leaves  
upon the water in the well,  
still floating where they fell,  
reminded him of pleasant views  
which he had had to lose,  
beyond the river and the lake.  
His heart was fit to break,  
obsessed with vivid memories  
of each fresh gentle breeze  
and peaceful moonlight rendezvous  
he had enjoyed with Kieu  
in happy seasons of his life.  
Of course to his first wife  
these secret thoughts he could not tell  
and yet she knew full well  
what went on in her husband's head.  
She casually said  
to him one day at last, "My dear,  
it is at least a year  
since last you saw the cloud-white hair  
of your good father, there  
in Yixian's far-off lonely land.  
Isn't it time you planned  
to go back where he needs your care?  
When Thuc became aware  
she wanted him to take that road,  
it seemed as if a load  
was lifted from his simple heart.*

Thú quê thuần vược bén mùi,  
Giếng vàng đã rụng một vài lá ngô.  
Chạnh niềm nhớ cảnh giang hồ,  
Một màu quan tái mấy mùa gió trắng.  
Tình riêng chưa dám rỉ rã,  
Tiểu thư trước đã liệu chừng nhủ qua:  
"Cách năm mây bạc xa xa,  
"Lâm-tri cũng phải tính mà thần hôn".  
Được lời như mở tác son,  
Vó câu thẳng ruổi nước non quê người.  
Long lanh đáy nước in trời,  
Thành xây khói biếc non phơi bóng vàng.

*He hastened to depart  
and rode off over hills and streams  
towards where all his dreams  
were focused in that foreign town.*

*He cast his gaze, first down  
upon the waters far and near,  
which seemed to him as clear  
as if the sky shone in their deeps;  
then up to where the steeps  
of battlemented foothills stretched  
an endless, lightly sketched  
blue line, like smoke on autumn days.*

*Beyond, the sun's low rays  
showed ribs upon the mountain-side,  
as if, with tawny hide,  
some lean and hungry lion lazed.*



*No sooner had Thuc raised  
his riding-crop to spur his steed  
and galloped off at speed,  
than Hoan-Thu climbed into her coach  
and drove up the approach  
that led to her ancestral hall.*

*She told her mother all;  
just how ungrateful Thuc had been,  
and thus poured out her spleen;  
I thought that if I once gave way  
by making a display  
of that fierce jealousy within  
which, like an itchy skin,  
torments and makes my heart inflamed  
I simply would be blamend;  
I'd shamed my husband, folk would say,  
I've looked the other way  
so far, pretending not to care.*

*But to repay the pair  
of them, I've got, so I believe  
a good trick up my sleeve,  
though I have never shown my hand.*

*To reach Yixian by land  
would take a man a month at least.*

*The time would be decreased  
considerably if afloat,  
So, I shall choose a boat  
and servants who'll do as I've said.*

Roi câu vừa giống dặm trường,  
Xe hương nàng cũng thuận đường qui ninh  
Thưa nhà huyền hết mọi tình,  
Nỗi chàng ở bạc nỗi mình chịu đen.  
Nghĩ rằng: "Ngứa ghẻ hờn ghen,  
"Xấu chàng mà có ai khen chi mình!"  
"Vậy nên ngành mặt làm thình,  
"Miau cao vốn đã rắp ranh những ngày.  
"Lâm-Tri đường bộ thảng chầy,  
Mà đường hải đạo sang ngay thì gần.  
"Dọn thuyền lựa mặt gia nhân,  
"Hãy đem dây xích buộc chân nàng về.  
"Làm cho cho mệt cho mê,  
"Làm cho đau đớn ê chề cho coi!  
"Trước cho bỏ ghét những người,  
Sau cho để một trò cười về sau!"  
Phu nhân khen chúc rất mầu,  
Chiều con mới dạy mặc dầu ra tay.

*and send them there ahead  
to bring the girl bound hand and foot.  
I'll see that she is put  
through such ordeals she'll pass clean out;  
I'll see she's knocked about  
till she can't even stand upright.  
I'll satisfy my spite,  
you'll see, upon the pair of them,  
whom I shall then condemn  
to serve as public laughing-stocks.  
Such an unorthodox  
new stratagem was exquisite,  
and showed a cunning wit,  
the mother said, approvingly,  
and everything should be  
exactly as her daughter planned.  
They hired a ruffian band  
and rigged a junk with sails and shrouds,  
to speed like windblown clouds;  
with full instructions what to do  
they chose as leaders two  
tough serving men named Khuyen and Ung.  
The junk sailed for Shandong  
fast as a leaf before a gale.*



Sửa sang buồm gió lèo mây  
Khuyến Ung, lại chọn một bầy côn quang.  
Dẫn dò hết các mọi đường,  
Thuận phong một lá vượt sang biển Tề.

\*

*A shape glimpsed through a veil,  
 since Thuc had left, Kieu lived alone.  
 She murmured with a groan,  
 as each new trouble creased her brow  
     My parents must, by now  
     be like old trees whose day is done,  
     whose tops alone the sun,  
 declining, lights both bright and clear,  
     but how can I, from here  
     discover whether they are well?  
     How can I ever tell  
     if life is pleasant there of grim?  
     My hair, once cut for Kim,  
     convers my shoulders once again,  
     though love burnt red hot then,  
 though vows were sworn by hills and streams.  
     My future is, it seems,  
     now that I'm a concubine  
     frail as a creeping vine,  
     bound up with his on whom I lean.  
     And will it stay serene,  
 this "double marriage" Thuc's arranged?  
     I even would have changed  
     the unfair life which I have led  
     for that which, it is said,  
     up in the moon the fairy fair  
     lives in her palace there -  
     cold and alone, so I have heard -*

Nàng từ chiếc bóng song the,  
Đường kia nổi nọ như chia mỗi sầu.  
Bóng dàu đã xé ngang dàu,  
Biết đâu ấm lạnh biết đâu ngọt bùi.  
Tóc thề đã chấm ngang vai,  
Nào lời non nước nào lời sắt son?  
Sấn bùn chút phận cón con,  
Khuôn duyên biết có vuông tròn cho chẳng?  
Thân sao nhiều nổi bất bằng?  
Liều như cung Quảng ở Hằng nghĩ nao!  
Đêm thu gió lọt song đào,  
Nửa vành trăng khuyết ba sao giữa trời.  
Nén hương đến trước Phật dài,  
Nổi lòng khấn chứa cặn lời vãn vãn...

*The gentle breezes stirred  
the curtains in Kieu's room that night  
the crescent moon shone bright;  
Orion's belt was near to it;  
as soon as she had lit  
some joss-sticks, Kieu went out for prayer  
into the garden, where  
a tiny temple had been set.  
She had not finished yet  
her plaintive pouring out of prayer*

when from the bushes there  
 a band of ugly thugs sprang out  
 with yells and dreadful shout,  
 enough to scare the fiends of hell;  
 the dark court filled pell-mell  
 with gleaming blades of unsheathed swords.  
 Aghast, Kieu watched the hordes  
 not knowing what the uproar meant;  
 she smelled a drowsy scent  
 and dropped down drugged in deep-dreamed sleep.  
 The ruffians rushed to sweep  
 the now unconscious girl with force  
 straight up onto a horse  
 that they had waiting by the gate;  
 lit fites to penetrate  
 the boudoir and the library;  
 and accidentally  
 they found abandoned in the sedge  
 close by the river's edge  
 a body with its gullet slit;  
 they quickly carried it  
 and made the house, now well on fire  
 the corpse's funeral pyre;  
 for those who found it in the room  
 would certainly assume  
 that this was Kieu's unhappy plight.  
 Bewildered, though, with fright,  
 the servants scuttled off to hide  
 behind the trees outside,  
 while Kieu was kidnapped on the sly.

Dưới hoa dầy lũ ác nhân,  
Ầm ầm khóc quỷ kinh thần mọc ra!  
Đầy sân gương tuốt sáng lòe,  
Thất kinh nàng chưa biết là làm sao.  
Thuốc mê đầu đã tước vào,  
Mơ màng như giấc chiêm bao biết gì!  
Vực ngay lên ngựa tức thì,  
Phòng đào viện sách bốn bề lửa dong.  
Sẵn thầy vô chủ bên sông,  
Đem vào để đó lộn sông ai hay?  
Tôi đòi phách lạc hồn bay,  
Pha càn bụi cỏ gốc cây ẩn mình.

Thuc's father lived nearby,  
and, horrified to see the flame,  
he and his servants came  
straight to his son's fierce-blazing house.  
Some tried in vain to douse  
the fire, while some looked here and there  
for victims; everywhere  
people were rushing to and fro.  
A wind began to blow  
and fanned the flames to new excess;  
they searched, without success;  
the vanished girl had left no trace.  
In one another's face  
the servants saw bewilderment;  
they paused, then back they went  
to search the well, and next to hunt  
behind and then in front  
of where the flames were dying then.  
At last they looked again  
at where the boudoir used to be;  
among the charred debris  
they found a heap of calcined bone;  
but how could they have known  
that this was just a wicked ruse?  
Of course the bones were Kieu's  
who would suspect that they were not?  
On thinking of the lot  
of absent son and virtuous bride

Thức ông nhà cũng gần quanh,  
Chợt trông ngọn lửa thất kinh rụng rời.  
Tớ thấy chạy thẳng đến nơi,  
Tôi bời tưới lửa tìm người lao xao.  
Gió cao ngọn lửa càng cao,  
Tôi dò tìm đủ nòng nào thấy đâu!  
Hốt hơ hốt hái nhìn nhau,  
Giếng sâu bụi rậm trước sau tìm quàng.  
Chạy vào chốn cũ phòng hương,  
Trong tro thấy một đống xương cháy tàn.  
Ngay tình ai biết mưu gian,  
Hắn nòng thôi lại có bàn rằng ai!  
Thức ông sùi sụt ngăn dài,  
Nghĩ con vắng vẻ thương người nét na.  
Di hài nhật sắp về nhà,  
Nào là khám liệm nào là tang trai.  
Lẽ thường đã đủ một hai,  
Lục trình chàng cũng đến nơi bấy giờ.



*Thuc's father sobbed and cried;  
he reverently took great pains  
to gather her remains  
to take them home, as he supposed;  
once there, they were enclosed  
in shroud and coffin for the rite.*

*The ritual was not quite  
complete, when from his lengthy road  
Thuc strode to his abode;  
but where his study once had been  
nothing was to be seen  
but ash and charcoal everywhere;  
the roofless walls were bare,  
and stained with weather's polychrome.  
Going to his father's home  
he saw an altar made of wood  
on which a tablet stood;  
the name inscribed thereon was Kieu;  
Poor Thuc ! He bade adieu  
in front of what he thought her bier,  
with many a lover's tear,  
to her of whom he was so fond,  
as though the marriage bond  
were tying knots around his heart,  
and every inward part  
were set on fire with misery.  
Oh, why should such as she  
have had to meet with such an end?  
Did justice not intend  
that she and I should meet again?  
But at our parting then  
when she and I kissed fond farewell,  
How could I ever tell  
it was goodbye for evermore?*

Bước vào chốn cũ lâu thơ,  
Tro than một đống nắng mưa bốn tường.  
Sang nhà cha tới trung đường,  
Linh sàng bài vị thờ nàng ở trên.  
Hỡi ôi! nói hết sự duyên,  
Tơ tình đĩa ruột lửa phiền cháy gan!  
Gieo mình vật vã khóc than:  
"Con người thế ấy thác oan thế này!  
"Chắc rằng mai trúc lại vầy,  
"Ai hay vĩnh quyết là ngày đưa nhau!  
"Thương càng nghĩ, nghĩ càng đau,  
"Để ai ráp thảm quạt sầu cho khuây".

*He fell upon the floor;  
for many bitter hours he cried.  
The more he mourned his bride  
the more he thought of times long gone;  
as memory ached on  
his grief grew ever more profound -  
no drug has yet been found  
to dull the pain of tortured hearts!*

*There lived close by those parts,  
poor Thuc eventually learned,  
a sorcerer, who burned  
red papers with a written spell,  
which summoned ghosts to tell  
the fate of persons who were dead.*

*He could, the rumour said,  
in this way get reports first-hand  
from Hell's Nine Fountains, and  
the Triple Peaks of Paradise.*

*With gifts of costly price  
Thuc went to him without delay  
and asked him straight away  
to go and find what dead Kieu felt.*

*The mystic hermit knelt -  
the written papers were alight -  
his spirit soon took flight  
and left, throughout the whole seance  
his body in a trance.*

*He then recovered consciousness  
in half an hour or less,  
before the incense sticks burned out.*

*He spoke without a doubt:  
"I could not see her face; but wait;  
I learnt about her fate;  
she has to bear life's burden still;  
she cannot die until  
for all her debt she can atone.*

Gần miền nghe có một thầy,  
Phi phù trí quý cao tay thông huyền.  
Trên tam đảo dưới cầu tuyền,  
Tìm đâu thì cũng biết tin rõ ràng.  
Sấm sanh lễ vật rước sang,  
Xin tìm cho thấy mặt nàng hỏi han.  
Đạo nhân phục trước tĩnh đàn,  
Xuất thần dây phất chưa tàn nén hương.  
Tì ở về mình bạch nói tường:  
"Mặt nàng chẳng thấy việc nàng đã tra.  
"Người này nặng nghiệp oan gia,  
"Còn nhiều nợ lắm sao đà thác cho!  
"Mệnh cung đang mắc nạn to,  
"Một năm nữa mới thăm dò được tin.  
"Hai bên giáp mặt chiến chiến,  
"Muốn nhìn mà chẳng dám nhìn, lạ thay!"  
Nghe lời nói lạ đường này,  
Sự nàng đã thế lời thầy dám tin!

*Her horoscope has shown  
some dire misfortune has occurred.  
No news, though, will be heard  
now for a year of her, and then  
you both will meet again,  
and face to face; but strange to say  
you both will turn away  
and dare not steal the longed-for look".*

*This sounded mad to Thuc!  
Could he believe it, when he knew  
what had occurred to Kieu?  
Sheer nonsense, what the mystic said!  
How could he meet the dead  
again upon this world of dross?  
Thuc mourned the double loss  
of withered flower and wasted spring:*

*"I am not anything  
like good enough a man to see  
an angel such as she  
again hereafter", he confessed.*

*Of fragile flowers, the best  
has fallen in the street when;  
by now she must be  
by roaring torrents ashore,  
to rest for evermore  
in peace in some secluded bay.*

*How could that dreamer say  
that Hell is here on earth with us?*

*Chẳng qua đồng cốt quàng xiên,  
Người đâu mà lại thấy trên cỏi trần?  
Tiếc hoa những ngậm ngùi xuân,  
Thân này để lại mấy lần gặp tiên!*

\*

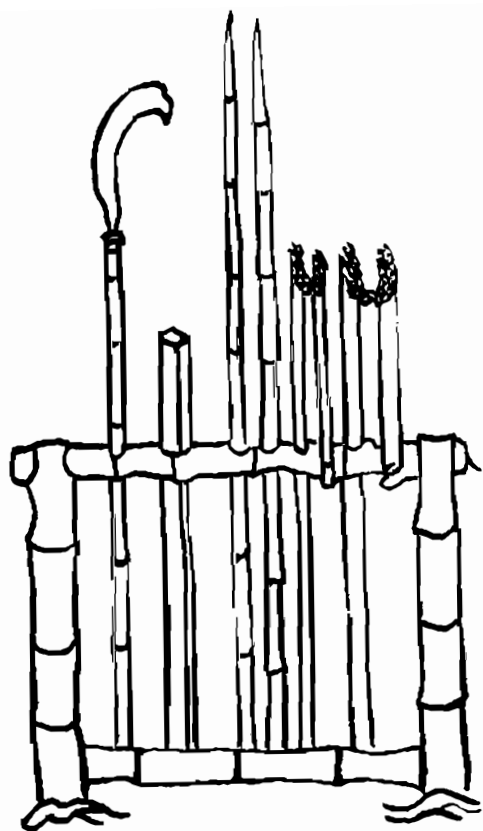
*Nước trời hoa rụng đã yên,  
Hay dầu địa ngục ở miền nhân gian!*



*The two nefarious  
successful robbers, Khuyen and Ung,  
had meanwhile roughly flung  
the still unconscious girl on board  
and steered their junk toward  
Wuxi, with every sail set square  
As soon as they were there  
they took the kidnapped girl ashore,  
and quickly set off for  
the palace of the mandarin.  
They carried her straight in  
to prove what zeal they had displayed;  
then, sleeping still they laid  
her in a servant's room apart.  
She woke up with a start  
but thought she must be in dream;  
this bedroom did not seem  
to be in her own home, but where?  
Surprised, she had to stare;  
what stately home was this, she mused?  
While she was still confused  
and scarcely conscious yet, a call  
came from the distant hall  
commanding Kieu's attendance there.  
Some maids came down the stair  
to fetch the poor girl at the run.  
Scared stiff Kieu followed one,  
and looking up, she saw a suite*

Khuyển Ưng đã dắt mưu gian,  
Vực nàng đưa xuống để an dưới thuyền.  
Buồm cao lèo thẳng cánh suyền,  
Đè chừng huyện Tích băng miền vượt sang.  
Giã dò, lên trước sảnh đường,  
Khuyển Ưng hai đứa nộp nàng dâng công.  
Vực nàng tạm xuống môn phòng,  
Hãy còn thêm thiếp giấc nồng chưa phai.  
Hoàng lương chợt tỉnh hồn mai,  
Cửa nhà đau mắt lâu dài nào đây?  
Bàng hoàng dở tỉnh dở say,  
Sảnh đường mắng tiếng đòi ngay lên hầu.  
Ả hoàn trên dưới giục mau,  
Hai hũm nàng mới theo sau một người.  
Ngước trông tòa rộng dãy dài,  
"Thiên quan trủng tử" có bài treo trên.  
Ban ngày sáp thấp hai bên,  
Giữa giường thất bảo ngồi trên một bà.

*of rooms both large and neat,  
with, written on a plaque above.  
Official mansion of  
the First Provincial Mandarin;  
No daylight dared come in,  
and candles glimmered in the gloom.  
The middle of the room  
was dominated by a bed  
inlaid from foot to head  
with seven sorts of precious stone,  
and serving as a throne  
on which an aged lady sat,*



who now fired questions at  
poor Kieu just like a shower of hail.  
Kieu frankly told her tale,  
but to her great surprise, no shred  
of sympathy - instead  
the lady now began to say.  
The vicious words of a  
professional adventuress!  
This girl, I'm sure, is less  
than honest, and a runaway  
maidservant, I should say;  
or if not, an unfaithful wife!  
A study drawn from life  
of dunghill hen or graveyard cat,  
her answers witness that  
she angers people everywhere!  
Now girl, how did you dare  
to speak to me so haughtily,  
when you had come to me  
and sold yourself to be my slave?  
Well, if you misbehave  
did you believe we wouldn't care?  
Strike her, you over there  
with thirty lashes of the cane,  
until it is quite plain  
for her to see how strict I am!  
The servants cried "Yes, Ma'am!  
and had Kieu had a hundred tongues,

*Gan gừng ngọn hời ngành tra,  
Sực mình, nằng phải cứ mà gởi thua.  
Bất tình nổi trận mây mưa,  
Mắng rằng: "Những giống bơ thờ quen thân.  
"Con này chẳng phải thiện nhân,  
"Chẳng phường trốn chúa thì quân lộn chồng.  
"Ra tuồng mèo mả gà đồng,  
"Ra tuồng lúng túng chẳng xong bề nào.  
"Đã đem mình bán cửa tao,  
Lại còn khùng khỉnh làm cao thế này!  
"Nào là gia pháp, nọ bay!  
"Hãy cho ba chục biết tay một lần!"  
Ả hoàn trên dưới dạ rân,  
Dẫu rằng trăm miệng khôn phân lẽ nào!  
Trúc còn ra sức đập vào,  
Thịt nào chẳng nát gan nào chẳng kinh!  
Xót thay đào lý một cành,  
Một phen mưa gió tan tành một phen!*

no effort of her lungs  
could now have made a single word  
of explanation heard  
a man began to bludgeon Kieu  
with vigour, and bamboo  
whose thickness was at least an inch.  
What flesh then would not flinch?  
Is courage found that would not fear?  
It made the girl appear  
as frail and as pathetic now  
as plum or peach-tree bough  
which had been battered when it rained.  
The lady next ordained  
that "Slave Flower" Kieu should now be named,  
to labour, she proclaimed,  
a servant in the women's wing.  
From then on everything  
Kieu wore was coarse blue servants' dress.  
She shared their merciless  
hard drudgery, which changed her grace  
to tousled hair, and face  
like lead; but Kieu could not care less.

*Hoa nô truyền dạy đổi tên,  
Buồng the dạy ép vào phiên thị tì.  
Ra vào theo lũ thanh y,  
Dãi dầu tóc rối da chì quần bao!*



*The palace governess  
saw the refined way Kieu behaved,  
and pitying how she slaved,  
gave medicine, or cups of tea,  
with wise advice, that she  
might get her zest for living back  
"Good fortune or its lack  
are predetermined, I believe",  
she told her, "Why then grieve?  
Frail as a reed you seem to me,  
weak as a willow tree;  
preserve your looks for better times!  
Think! Some disgraceful crimes,  
done in a previous life of yours  
must surely be the cause  
of all your present miseries;  
such trouble never is  
without some reason, it appears!  
Walls have as many ears  
as streamlets through a wood descend;  
so if you meet a friend,  
pretend you've never met before,  
because you can be sure  
that if a sudden storm should burst,  
you soon would be submersed  
like creeping ant or feeble bee;  
suspected of complicity,  
how could you prove your innocence?"*

Quản gia có một mụ nào,  
Thấy người thấy nét ra vào mà thương,  
Khi chè chén khi thuốc thang,  
Dem lời phương tiện mở đường hiếu sinh.  
Dạy rằng: "May rủi đã đành,  
"Liều bõ mình giữ lấy mình cho hay.  
"Cũng là oan nghiệp chi đây,  
"Sa cơ mới đến thế này, chẳng dung.  
"Ở đây tai vách mạch rừng.  
"Thấy ai người cũ cũng đừng nhìn chi.  
"Kẻo khi sấm sét bất kỳ,  
"Con ong cái kiến kêu gì được oan!"

*These words of common sense  
brought tears like pearls upon Kieu's cheeks.*

*In the ensuing weeks  
she turned them over in her mind.*

*My exile was unkind,  
damned to this world of wind and dust  
but twice, twice as unjust  
is this last new calamity!*

*Cruel Fate relentlessly  
seems to pursue the fair of face,  
if I cannot erase  
the debt of wrongs done long ago.*

*I'd willingly forego  
my life, if that would pay the score;  
could living any more  
appeal to me, whom grief has made  
a broken piece of jade,  
my beauty just a faded flower?  
She bowed to Fortune's power  
while hoping for a better day.*

Nàng càng giọt ngọc như chan,  
Nỗi lòng luống những bàn hoàn niềm tây:  
"Phong trần kiếp chịu đã đầy  
"Lắm than lại có thứ này bằng hai!  
"Phận sao bạc chẳng vừa thôi?  
"Khăng khăng buộc mãi lấy người hồng nhan.  
"Đã đành tức trái tiền oan,  
"Cũng liều ngọc nát hoa tàn mà chi!"

*Thuc's wife soon came to pay  
a visit to her mother's hall,  
and asked if she would call  
for Kieu; she did so in a while  
and told her with a smile,  
"Your new young mistress needs more staff  
and so, on her behalf  
I'm sending you to be her maid"  
Kieu silently obeyed  
and went unable, though, to tell  
if this would lead to Hell  
or Paradise for her at last.  
From morn till night she passed  
each needed towel and called for comb  
in the young lady's home;  
but how could she do otherwise?  
An acolyte complies,  
and she was just an acolyte*

*Những là nường nấu qua thì,  
Tiểu thư phải buổi mới về ninh gia  
Mẹ con trò chuyện lân la,  
Phu nhân mới gọi nàng ra dạy lời:  
"Tiểu thư dưới trướng thiếu người,  
"Cho về bên ấy theo đòi lâu trang".  
Lĩnh lời nàng mới theo sang,  
Biết đâu địa ngục thiên đường là đâu!  
Sớm khuya khăn mặt lược đầu,  
Phận con hầu giữ con hầu dám sai!*

*Thuc's wife, one starry night,  
when all was peaceful calm and still  
asked Kieu about her skill  
at playing violin or flute.  
Kieu meekly took a lute,  
retuned it, and began to play;  
in some mysterious way  
the music had a sobbing strain.  
Then pattered like the rain,  
to capture any listener's heart;  
moved by such skilful art  
Hoan-Thu seemed slightly less severe.*

*Phải đem êm ả chiều trời,  
Trúc tơ hỏi đến nghề chơi mọi ngày.  
Lĩnh lời nàng mới lựa dây,  
Nỉ non thánh thót dễ say lòng người!*



*Since, like a hunted deer,  
within this house she first had strayed,  
only Kieu's shadow stayed  
to share her sufferings by day;  
only her heart would stay  
to share the sad hours of the night.  
Her recollection might  
be filled with pictures far and dim  
of Yixian and of him  
for whom she still felt some regard;  
but when the way was barred  
by streams and hills, there was no chance  
to see his countenance  
till in some future life on high.  
White cirrus veiled the sky;  
she peered toward her native land  
and where her home must stand;  
the days and months went, new months came,  
but all was just the same;  
what passed beneath those distant skies?*

Tiểu thư xem cũng thương tài,  
Khuôn uy đường cũng bớt vài bốn phân.  
Cửa người dày dọa chút thân,  
Sớm năn nỉ bóng đêm ân hận lòng.  
Lâm Tri chút nghĩa dèo bông,  
Nước bèo để chữ tương phùng kiếp sau!  
Bốn phương mây trắng một màu,  
Trống vơi cố quốc biết đâu là nhà?

\*

*Since the assumed demise  
of Kieu, like some wild bird bereft  
because his mate had left,  
in Yixian, Thuc, day after day,  
had shut himself away  
within his empty room, forlorn.*

*The silver crescent, drawn  
by the new moon, recalled above  
the eyebrows of his love;  
remains of make-up, and perfume  
which still hung round the room,  
increased his sorrow sevenfold.*

*Spring's lotus was grown old,  
chrysanthemums showed golden flowers;  
daylight had too few hours,  
too long was melancholy, though;  
the winter soon would go  
and spring would not be far behind;  
but where, then, could he find  
the one he loved who now was dead?*

*"But that is fate"; he said  
and tried to silence sad regret  
and memory; he let  
his mind recall his native land;  
nostalgia's firm command  
now summoned him back home again.*

Lần lần tháng trọn ngày qua,  
Nỗi gần nào biết đường xa thế này.  
Lâm-Tri từ thuở uyên bay,  
Phòng không thương kẻ thảng ngày chiếc thán.  
Mây ai trắng mới in ngần,  
Phấn thừa hương cũ bội phần xót xa!  
Sen tàn cúc lại nở hoa,  
Sầu dài ngày ngắn đông đà sang xuân.  
Tìm đâu cho thấy cố nhân?  
Lấy câu vận mệnh khuấy dần nhớ thương.  
Chạnh niềm nhớ cánh gia hương,  
Nhớ quê, chàng lại tìm đường thăm quê.

*His first wife gave him then  
effusive greetings at her door  
when he returned once more  
but there was scarcely time to say  
that while he was away  
they missed each other bitterly,  
or ask with courtesy  
how one another's health had been,  
when, rolling up the screen  
that was suspended there before  
the perfumed chamber's door  
Hoan-Thu called out, commanding Kieu  
to come and pay her due  
respects to her new master here.  
When ordered to appear  
she inched forth, step by step, in dread  
then suddenly stopped dead;  
"Can I" she thought "be seeing right?  
Is this some trick of light?  
Have I been dazzled by the sun?  
Can that be anyone  
but Thuc who's sitting there so grand?  
Ah, now I understand;  
I've truly let myself be trapped!  
My future has been scrapped!  
Oh, what a woman! What a trick!  
Could any be more slick  
at devilry than this one here?*

Tiểu thư đón cửa già già,  
Hàn huyền vừa cạn mọi bề gần xa.  
Nhà hương cao cuốn bức là,  
Phòng trong truyền gọi nàng ra lạy mừng.  
Bước ra một bước một dừng,  
Trông xa nàng đã tỏ chừng nẻo xa:  
"Phải rằng nắng quáng đèn lò,  
"Rõ ràng ngồi đó chẳng là Thúc sinh?"  
"Bây giờ tình mới tỏ tình,  
"Thôi thôi đã mắc vào vành chẳng sai!  
"Chước dâu có chước lạ đời,  
"Người dâu mà lại có người tình mai!"  
"Rõ ràng thật lúa đôi ta,  
"Làm ra con ở chúa nhà đôi nơi!  
Bề ngoài thơn thớt nói cười,  
"Mà trong nham hiểm giết người không dao.  
"Bây giờ đất thấp trời cao,  
"Ăn làm sao nói làm sao bây giờ?"

*The truth is crystal clear;  
we're kept apart successfully  
a slave she's made of me.  
The master of the house, of Thuc!  
And up till now, she took  
me in by talking playfully,  
while plotting inwardly  
to kill me with no need of knife!  
What can I say? My life  
is so abased, and his so high,  
that he is like the sky  
and I the humble earth below."  
The poor girl did not know  
what she should think; did she but look  
at her beloved Thuc,  
she felt as any silkworm feels  
when on the spinning wheels  
its heart is twisted and dragged out.  
And yet she had no doubt,  
now, under Hoan-Thu's eagle eye,  
that she had best not try  
do ought but what her mistress said.  
Meekly she bowed her head  
within the court of blossom-trees.*

*Càng trông mặt càng ngẩn ngơ,  
Ruột tửm đòi đoạn như tơ rối bời.  
Sợ uy dấm chẳng vâng lời,  
Cúi đầu nép xuống sân mai một chiều.*



The young man, ill at ease,  
seemed not to know what he should do:  
"Oh help! is that not Kieu?  
How could my darling fall so low?  
he thought: "ah, now I know  
by whom this cunning trap was laid"  
So he too was afraid  
to give her his acknowledgement  
but how could he prevent  
betrayal of their acquaintance, though,  
when tears began to flow  
which self-control could not abate?  
His wife then, looking straight  
at tears like pearls upon his cheek  
at once began to speak:  
"My darling, why are you so sad?  
What cause can you have had  
when you have just come home, for tears?  
The customary years  
to mourn a mother who has died  
are just complete," he cried  
"my heart will always grieve for her  
who lives a prisoner -  
upon the mountain of the dead"  
"Really, dear", Hoan-Thu said,  
"you have become a pious son!  
But now, your journey done,  
let's wash away its grime with wine  
which is the anodyne  
for sorrow when the night is dank".

Sinh đã phách lạc hồn xiêu:  
"Thương ôi! chẳng phải nàng Kiều ở đây?  
"Nhân làm sao đến thế này?  
"Thôi thôi ta đã mắc tay ai rồi!"  
Sợ quen, dám hở ra lời,  
Khôn ngăn giọt ngọc sụt sùi nhỏ sa.  
Tiểu thư trông mặt hỏi tra:  
"Mới về có việc chi mà động dong?"  
Sinh rằng: "Hiếu phục vừa xong,  
"Suy lòng trắc dĩ đau lòng chung thiên!"  
Khen rằng: "Hiếu tử đã nên!  
"Tẩy trần mượn chén giải phiền đêm thu"

*Both wife and husband drank;  
Kieu had to wait on their repast  
had to be slow or fast  
depending how Hoan-Thu might feel.  
And then she had to kneel  
and had to hand the wine to Thuc.  
Thuc felt, as he partook,  
yet more confused, more deeply grieved.  
Whenever he received  
a cup that Kieu had had to pour  
his tears poured even more;  
he looked away and tried to laugh.  
Then, when another half  
a cup was poured, with artfulness  
pretending drunkenness  
he said that he could drink no more.  
Hoan-Thu cried with a roar.  
"You've put your master off his wine  
Slave-Flower, these hands of mine  
will whip you for it, by my life!  
Defeated by his wife  
Thuc swallowed down the bitter cup.*

Vợ chồng chén tạc chén thù,  
Bắt nàng đứng chực trì hồ hai nơi,  
Bắt khoan bắt nhặt đến lời,  
Bắt quỳ tận mặt bắt mời tận tay.  
Sinh càng như đại như ngầy,  
Giọt dài giọt ngắn chén đầy chén vơi.  
Ngành đi chợt nói chợt cười,  
Cáo say chàng đã giạm bài lảng ra.  
Tiểu thư vội thét: "Con Hoa!  
"Khuyên chàng chẳng cạn thì ta có dòn!"  
Sinh càng nát ruột tan hồn,  
Chén mời phải ngậm bồ hòn ráo ngay!

*Hoan-Thu at once thought up  
another entertainment, so  
she acted now as though  
she was becoming merry, quaffed,  
and talked nonstop, and laughed;  
and then when they were half way through  
a toast, she turned to Kieu  
quite unexpectedly, and said:  
"She's very talented  
this Slave-Flower now girl, execute  
a tune upon your lute  
for Master to enjoy your skill!  
So Kieu, against her will  
half paralysed with fear, obeyed  
and skilfully she played  
seated beside a silken screen.  
The four strings having been  
touched by her trembling hands, it seemed  
the music sobbed and screamed,  
and Thuc was plunged in grief profound.  
Strange that the selfsame sound  
from wood and strings vibrating, while  
it made the audience smile  
should also make the actors weep!  
The young man could not keep  
pearl tears from flowing down his face;  
he bowed his head to place  
a furtive kerchief to his eyes.*

Tiểu thư cười nói tình say,  
Chưa xong cuộc rượu lại bày trò chơi.  
Rằng: "Hoa nó đủ mọi tài,  
"Bàn đàn thử dạo một bài chàng nghe!"  
Nàng đà tán hoán tê mê,  
Váng lời ra trước bình the vắn dài:  
Bốn dây như khóc như than,  
Khiến người trên tiệc cũng tan nát lòng!  
Cũng trong một tiếng tơ đồng,  
Người ngoài cười nụ người trong khóc thầm!  
Giọt châu lã chã khôn cầm,  
Cúi đầu chàng những gạt thắm giọt Tương.  
Tiểu thư lại thét lấy nàng:  
"Cuộc vui, gảy khúc đoạn trường ấy chi!  
"Sao chẳng biết ý tứ gì?  
"Cho chàng buồn bã tội thì tại người!"  
Sinh càng thâm thiết bồi hồi,  
Vội vàng gương nói gương cười cho qua.

*Hoan-Thu, with angry cries,  
complained "What thoughtlessness that shows;  
I can't think why you chose  
such mournful music for our feast.  
If Master is the least  
bit grieved by this, you'll be to blame".  
Thuc winced, and then became  
absurdly gay to make her stop.  
The steady water drop  
that dripped down from the dragon's head  
upon the water-clock, now said  
it was the third watch of the night.  
Her face, filled with delight  
showed how the trick she had employed  
made Hoan-Thu overjoyed  
her heart just jumped for joy at how  
what she was feeling now  
made up for all her secret woe.  
But Thuc now felt as though  
his body had been hacked in two  
the more he thought of Kieu  
the more frustration filled his heart,  
until he could depart  
with Hoan-Thu to the Phoenix-room*

*Giọt rồng canh đã điểm bọ,  
Tiểu thư nhìn mặt đường đà cam tâm.  
Lòng riêng tấp tểnh mừng thầm:  
"Vui này đã bỏ đau ngăm xưa nay!"  
Sinh thì gan héo ruột đầy,  
Nổi lòng, càng nghĩ càng cay đắng lòng.*



Alone now in the gloom  
Kieu pondered by the night-light's glow;  
the truth began to show  
as clear as bubbles on a stream.  
"Well, what a fiendish scheme!  
She must be earth's most jealous shrew!  
How skilled the hunter who  
decoyed the wild duck from its mate;  
how smart to separate  
two lovers on two different planes!  
My status here remains  
so low; compared with his so high  
like valley floor and sky;  
how could we talk of things once dear?  
Instead I'll have to hear  
that cruel woman's wounding speech.  
If ever I should reach  
my freedom, what would then await  
a girl of fragile fate?  
How could find a safe way out?  
Lonely, she thought about  
her misery till dawn was nigh;  
the lamp-oil soon ran dry  
her tears were wet the whole night through.

Người vào chung gối loan phòng,  
Nàng ra tựa bóng đèn dong canh dài.  
Bây giờ mới rõ tâm hơi,  
Máu ghen đâu có lạ đời nhà ghen!  
Chước đâu rẽ thủy chia uyên,  
Ai ra đường nấy ai nhìn được ai!  
Bây giờ một vực một trời,  
Hết điều khinh trọng hết lời thị phi!  
Nhẹ như bấc nặng như chì.  
Gỡ cho ra nợ còn gì là duyên?  
Lỡ làng chút phận thuyền duyên,  
Bể sâu sóng cả có tuyền được vay?  
Một mình âm ỷ đêm chầy,  
Đã dầu vơi nước mắt đầy năm canh.

*A servant still poor Kieu  
worked in the mansion day and night  
Hoan-Thu one day caught sight  
of her sad face, and asked the cause.*

*Kieu, having used a pause  
to choose her words replied, in short,  
that many times the thought  
of my misfortunes makes me grieve.*

*Hoan-Thu told Thuc, "I'll leave  
this matter, dear, within your power  
to question this Slave-Flower  
and find out what she hopes to gain".*

*Her husband winced with pain  
he should not speak and dared not look;  
but taking courage, Thuc  
lest worse befall if he demurred  
and weighing every word  
enquired of Kieu attentively.*

*She gave respectfully -  
her head upon the flowery ground  
in reverence profound -  
some writing to her questioner.*

*He passed it to Hoan-Thu  
who seemed quite moved by what she read.*

*She gave it back, and said  
"Her talent and her intellect  
deserve sincere respect  
her fate needs pity, not our scorn.*

Sớm khuya hầu hạ dài doanh,  
Tiểu thư chạm mặt đề tình hỏi tra.  
Lựa lời nàng mới thưa qua:  
"Phải khi mình lại xót xa nỗi mình".  
Tiểu thư lại hỏi Thúc sinh:  
"Cậy chàng tra lấy thực tình cho nao!"  
Sinh đà rút ruột như bào,  
Nói ra chẳng tiện trông vào chẳng đang!  
Nhưng e lại lụy đến nàng,  
Đánh liều mới sẽ lựa đường hỏi tra,  
Cúi đầu quỳ trước sân hoa,  
Thân cung nàng mới thảo qua một tờ.  
Diện tiền trình với tiểu thư,  
Thoắt xem dường có gần ngơ chút tình.  
Liền tay trao lại Thúc sinh,  
Rằng: "Tài nên trọng mà tình nên thương!  
"Vĩ chẳng có số giàu sang,  
"Giá này dẫu đúc nhà vàng cũng nên!"

*If she were richly born  
she would deserve a house of gold;  
misfortunes manifold  
life's voyage brought to her instead.*

*Such grief, unmerited  
by such a talent, comes to few!  
That's absolutely true"*  
*said Thuc, "but yet the fair of face  
cruel Fortune seems to place  
not seldom in the deepest woe.*

*It has been always so;  
be merciful and treat her well".*

*"It is her wish to dwell,  
she writes, a Buddhist anchorite".*

*Hoan-Thu went on; all right!  
Since she believes that would be best  
I'll grant her this request*

*To help her from the state she's in.*

*The temple to Kuan-Yin,  
goddess of mercy, which is found  
within the garden round  
our home, has ancient lofty trees  
has pools with rockeries  
in all four seasons blooms with flowers  
There let her spend her hours  
tending the temple, deep in prayer".*

"Bể trần chìm nổi thuyền duyên.  
"Hữu tài thương nổi vô duyên lạ đời!"  
Sinh rằng: "Thật có như lời,  
"Hong nhan bạc mệnh một người nào vay!  
"Nghìn xưa âu cũng thế này,  
"Từ bi âu liệu bớt tay mới vừa".  
Tiểu thư rằng: "Ý trong tờ,  
"Rắp đem mệnh bạc xin nhờ cửa không.  
"Thôi thì thôi cũng chiều lòng,  
"Cũng cho khỏi lụy trong vòng bước ra.  
"Sẵn Quan Âm các vườn ta,  
"Có cây trăm thước có hoa bốn mùa.  
"Có cổ thụ có sơn hồ,  
"Cho nàng ra đó giữ chùa chép kinh".

*Next morning, when the air  
was bright with sunbeams interlaced  
five offerings were placed  
already ready for the rite.*

*Kieu stood, a neophyte,  
before the Buddha's altar there.*

*The customary prayer  
she said: threefold submission and  
a promise to withstand  
the five temptations next she made;  
and to the lowest grade  
of novice nun she was professed.  
The blue clothes, which had dressed  
the slave, were changed for the coarse-spun  
brown habit of the nun;  
her name to "Crystal Spring" was changed  
Hoan-Thu and Thuc arranged  
for money to be set aside  
which daily would provide  
the oil to fill the lamps for Kieu.*

*Two servants Xuan and Thu  
were told to help the nun to fix  
and light the incense sticks  
and make the tea for offering.*

*Kieu's path, since entering  
this flowery refuge, seemed to rise  
much nearer paradise  
and further from this world of dust*

Tung tung trời mới bình minh,  
Hương hoa ngũ cúng sớm sanh lễ thường.  
Đưa nàng đến trước Phật đường,  
Tam quy ngũ giới cho nàng xuất gia.  
Áo xanh đổi lấy cà sa,  
Pháp danh lại đổi tên ra Trạc Tuyền.  
Sớm khuya tính đủ dầu đèn,  
Xuân Thu, cắt sẵn hai tên hương trà.  
Nàng từ lánh gót vườn hoa,  
Đường gần rừng tía đường xa bụi hồng.  
Nhân duyên đâu lại còn mong?  
Khỏi điều thẹn phán tui hồng thì thôi.  
Phật tiền thăm lếp sàu vùi,  
Ngày pho thủ tự đêm nôi tám hương.  
Cho hay giọt nước cành dương,  
Lửa lòng tưới tắt mọi đường trần duyên.  
Nấu sòng từ trở màu thiền,  
Sàn thu trăng đã vài phen đứng đầu.



*It was enough to trust  
that she was free from love in here;  
no longer need she fear  
that men would fall for her in there;  
no longer need she bear  
the shame of beauty in disgrace.*

*Protected in this place  
beneath the Buddha's watchful eye,  
the whole day she would try  
to bury painful memory  
and hide her misery  
by copying a manuscript;  
and silently she slipped  
around the incense urns all night  
to keep their flames alight  
and quench her own fire, hour by hour.*

*At first, the healing power  
of Kuan-Yin's holy water snuffed  
the flames of love and sloughed  
the dust of earthly passions off.*

*From when she had to doff  
her servants' clothes for holy brown  
the moon shone brightly down  
upon her garden many nights  
but in its changing lights  
she sometimes felt now, even yet  
enmeshed within a net;  
and every time she looked around*

*Quan phòng then nhặt lưới mau,  
Nói lời trước mặt rơi châu vắng người.  
Gác kinh viện sách đôi nơi,  
Trong gang tấc lại gấp mười quan san.*

*well-bolted doors she found  
and guards who watched each garden gate.*

*She tried to simulate  
in public, a light-hearted tone  
but when she was alone  
then sadly slowed each bitter tear.*

*Her prayer tower was so near  
to her beloved's reading room  
and yet there seemed to loom  
barriers between them at this time  
ten times as hard to climb  
as mountain range or frontier gate  
past which Thuc had to wait  
in secret, uncomplaining woe.*

When Hoan-Thu had to go  
 to see her parents, then, one day  
 Thuc seized without delay  
 this chance to meet his secret love  
 and in the garden of  
 the shrine he sobbed out all his woe.  
 His tears soon seemed to glow  
 like pearls upon his robe of blue  
 "How I have wronged you, Kieu!  
 Once, in the springtime of my life.  
 I served, as queen, my wife  
 why should the Queen of Spring now seek  
 to crush a simple, weak  
 spring floweret such as you? he cried:  
 "no matter how we tried  
 we couldn't stand against her wiles.  
 Yet looking at you riles,  
 and speaking to you makes me choke  
 because this latest stroke  
 in your misfortunes I have made,  
 The mud has stained your jade  
 your life's young spring time has been lost.  
 No matter what the cost  
 in danger or distress thereof  
 I would have lived for love  
 and willingly for you have died  
 had I not had, beside  
 a greater obligation still

Những là ngậm thở nuốt than,  
Tiểu thư phải buổi vãn an về nhà.  
Thừa cơ, sinh mới lên ra,  
Xăm xăm đến mé vườn hoa với nàng.  
Sụt sùi giở nỗi đoạn trường,  
Giọt châu tầm tã dướm tràng áo xanh:  
"Đã cam chịu bạc với tình,  
"Chúa xuân để tội một mình cho hoa!  
"Thấp cơ thua trí đàn bà,  
"Trông vào đau ruột nói ra ngại lời.  
"Vì ta cho lụy đến người,  
"Cát lăm ngọc trắng thiệt đời xuân xanh.  
"Quản chi lên thác xuống ghềnh,  
"Cũng toan sống thác với tình cho xong.  
Tông đường chút chữa cam lòng,  
"Cẩn rằng bề một chữ đồng làm hai.  
Thẹn mình đá nát vàng phai,  
Trăm thân dễ chuộc một lời được sao?"

*and duty to fulfil  
to cause my legal wife to bear  
a legal son and heir  
to honour all my ancestors;  
suppressing, for this cause,  
my grief, I broke the bonds of love.  
But oh, the shame thereof!  
I split the stone, deface the gold  
on which our vows were told;  
not though ten thousand times I gave  
my body to the grave  
a willing sacrifice, in view  
of what I did to you  
could I redeem one broken vow!*



*"My storm-tossed life is now",  
Kieu answered "like a fragile junk  
and whether it is sunk  
or stays afloat is merely luck  
When I was firmly stuck  
it never had occurred to me  
that struggling to get free  
from reeds and rushes in the mere.  
I should be granted here  
the joy of meeting you again.  
Not worth a drop of rain  
I sacrificed my liberty  
and thought that that would be  
a good example to mankind.  
Ah, but instead I find  
in thinking of the harmony  
between you, Thuc, and me -  
our love like lute strings well attuned -  
that I retained the wound  
of knowing we had been in love  
whether its length was of  
a hundred years or just one day  
Please help me get away -  
I would remember that you tried"*



Nàng rằng: "Chiếc bách sóng dào,  
"Nổi chìm cũng mặc lúc nào rủi may!  
"Chú thân quần quai vũng lầy,  
"Sống thừa còn tưởng đến rày nữa sao?  
"Cũng liều một giọt mưa rào.  
"Mà cho thiên hạ trông vào cũng hay!  
"Xót vì cầm đã bén dây,  
"Chẳng trăm năm cũng một ngày duyên ta.  
"Liệu bài mở cửa cho ra,  
"Ấy là tình nặng ấy là ân sâu!"

*"Indeed, yes" Thuc replied  
I often think of your sad life.  
The heart, though, of my wife  
is an unfathomable pit  
and what she plots in it  
how could I ever, ever guess?  
If she proposed to press  
to further lengths her cruelty  
not only would it be  
a great calamity for you  
but would condemn me, too  
to misery, in any case.  
So flee now from this place  
our love must now be mortified  
our ways must now divide;  
who knows if we shall ever meet  
to keep and to repeat  
the vows we made by hills and sky?  
Though rivers may run dry  
and rocks in time be worn away,  
yet, till their dying day,  
the bond of heart to loving heart  
can no more tear apart  
than silkworms can from their cocoon.*

Sinh rằng: "Riêng tưởng bấy lâu,  
"Lòng người nham hiểm biết đâu mà lường.  
"Nữa khi giông tố phũ phàng.  
"Thiệt riêng đây cũng lại càng cực đây.  
"Liệu mà xa chạy cao bay,  
"Ái ân ta có ngần này mà thôi!  
"Bây giờ kẻ ngược người xuôi,  
"Biết bao giờ lại nối lời nước non?  
"Dẫu rằng sóng cạn đá mòn,  
"Con tằm đến thác cũng còn vương tơ!"

*They went on to commune  
about their past and future till  
they found their words could still  
not fully voice their feelings so,  
since neither wished to go,  
the two of them could only stand  
in silence, hand in hand,  
and gaze into each other's eyes.*

Cùng nhau kể kể sau xưa,  
Nói rồi lại nói lời chưa hết lời.  
Mặt trông tay chẳng nở rời,  
!loa nì đã động tiếng người nẻo xa.

Then, to their great surprise,  
a servant rushed out suddenly  
to warn them urgently  
that somebody was coming near.  
They stepped apart in fear  
concealing their embarrassment  
yet they could not prevent  
her seeing them together there  
when out of the thin air  
it seemed Hoan-Thu stepped round a tree.  
"Hello!" she said, with glee  
"Did you decide to take a walk?"  
Then poor Thuc tried to talk  
with studied words evasively  
"Well, yes, I came to see  
if I could pick some flowers to smell  
then thought I might as well  
while I was hereabout, incline  
my steps toward this shrine  
to watch her copy poetry"  
"What fine calligraphy!"  
exclaimed Hoan-Thu, as though impressed  
"Compare it with the best  
Old Master of the art Lan-Ting"  
there isn't anything  
to choose between her script and his  
how tragic, then, it is  
that such as she should have to live  
a shiftless fugitive  
with talents worth a thousand taels!

Nhận ngừng nuốt tũn đứng ra,  
Tiểu thư dâu đã rẽ hoa bước vào.  
Cười cười nói nói ngọt ngào,  
Hỏi: "Chàng mới ở chốn nào lại chơi?"  
Đối quanh, Sinh mới liệu lời:  
"Tìm hoa quá bước xem người viết kinh.  
Khen rằng: "Bút pháp đã tinh,  
"So vào với thiếp Lan-dình, nào thua!  
"Tiếc thay lưu lạc giang hồ,  
"Nghìn vàng thật cũng nên mua lấy tài!"

*Each monk or nun avails  
themselves of apricot-tree leaves for tea  
and Kieu served two or three  
cups each to Thuc and to Hoan-Thu  
who then took leave of her  
and strolled off to their library.*

*In deeper misery  
and with her reason in a whirl,  
Kieu called the servant-girl  
and questioned her on the affair.  
"Our mistress had been there  
a long time", she at once replied  
"She crept up close to hide  
in silence for a full half-hour.*

*It was within her power  
to listen to your every word;  
she very clearly heard  
you speak of your distress, you know;  
your love; the Master's woe;  
and everything you had to say.*

*She ordered me to stay  
with her, just out of sight from here  
and only to appear  
when she had heard the matter through".*

*This terrified poor Kieu  
who cried "Her cunning is too much!  
Is there another such?  
Such feminine audacity!*



Thiền trà cạn nước hồng mai,  
Thong dong nối gót thư trai cùng về.  
Nàng càng e lệ ủ ê,  
Rỉ tai hỏi lại hoa tì trước sau.  
Hoa rằng: "Bà đến đã lâu,  
"Nhón chân đứng nép độ dàu nửa giờ.  
"Rành rành kẻ tóc chân tơ,  
"Mấy lời nghe hết đã dư tỏ tường.  
"Bao nhiêu đoạn khổ tình thương,  
"Nỗi ông vật vã nỗi nàng thở than.  
Ngăn tôi đứng lại một bên,  
"Chán tai rồi mới bước lên trên lầu"  
Nghe thôi kinh hãi xiết dàu:  
"Đàn bà thế ấy thấy âu một người!  
"Ấy mới gan ấy mới tài!  
"Nghĩ càng thêm nổi sồn gai rụng rời!  
"Người dàu sâu sắc nước đời,  
"Mà chàng Thúc phải ra người bó tay!

*It really frightens me  
to think about her evil will;  
it makes my flesh creep, still;  
no slyer woman could be found  
and Thuc just stood around  
with folded arms and didn't stir!*

*A jealous wife like her,  
whose husband's deeds she could detect  
you surely would expect  
to gnash her teeth and knit her brow;  
but this one's different now!*

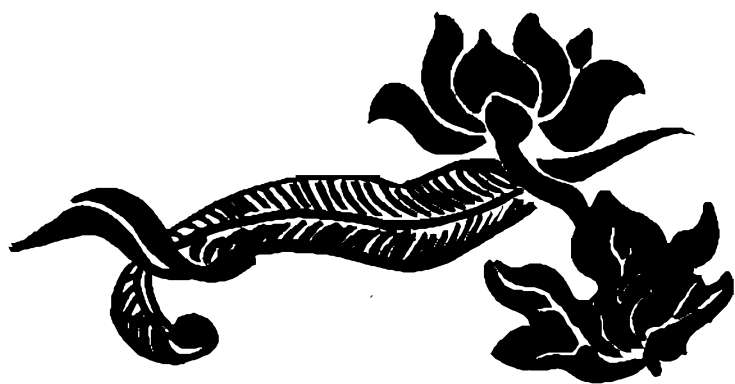
*She stood in silence, never stirred  
with not an angry word;  
just smiled at him and said hello!  
Did she get angry? No!  
She leaves that to the common folk  
and treats it as a joke;  
no one can guess her inmost thought.*

*So now I think I ought  
to take good care, if that's the case;  
while I am in this place  
somewhere there always seems to be  
a snake awaiting me  
or tiger's maw with jaws agape!*

*If I do not escape  
she'll climb my tree and strip it bare.  
Why should a mere weed care  
at falling in the stream once more?*

"Thực tang, bắt được đường này,  
"Máu ghen ai cũng chau mày nghiêng răng.  
"Thế mà im chẳng dãi dằng,  
"Chào mời vui vẻ nói năng dịu dàng!  
"Giận dẫu ra dạ thế thường,  
"Cười này mới thực khôn lường hiểm sâu!  
"Thân ta, ta phải lo âu,  
"Miệng hùm nọc rắn ở đâu chốn này!  
"Ví chẳng chấp cánh cao bay,  
"Rào cây lầu cũng có ngày bẻ hoa!  
"Phận bèo bao quản nước sa,  
"Lệnh dènh đâu nữa cũng là lệnh dènh.  
"Chín e quê khách một mình,  
"Tay không chưa dễ tìm vành ấm no!"

*I drifted to this shore  
and I shall drift away again.  
But yet I fear that when  
alone, and in a foreign land,  
with nothing in my hand  
a roof and food are hard to find.*



*She searched within her mind  
for some solution to her plight  
and from the shrine, that night  
she took some golden ornaments  
to pay for the expense  
she would incur while travelling.*

*She waited, listening;  
at last she heard the watch-drum's boom;  
Kieu darted through the gloom  
and climbed a wall, with creepers strewn;  
then, towards the setting moon  
she picked her way along the road.*

*Nghĩ đi nghĩ lại quanh co,  
Phật tiền sẵn có mọi đồ kim ngân.  
Bên mình giắt để hộ thân,  
Lần nghe canh đã một phần trống ba.  
Cái mình qua ngọn tường hoa,  
Lần đường theo bóng trăng tà về tây.*

*An early cockerel crowed  
behind a roadside sentry post  
where sand dunes climbed almost  
to half way up a wooded hill;  
the ground was dewy still,  
the prints Kieu's footsteps left were clear,  
she could not help but fear  
the rigours of her pilgrimage.*

*Across a little bridge  
her road led on through waning night;  
she trembled still with fright,  
and shivered, thinking of the cold.*

*Dawn started to unfold  
and slowly stained the eastern sky  
with mulberry-red dye  
that tinged to top of every tree.*

*And so Kieu aimlessly  
not knowing where to find a home  
could only drift and roam  
until a tall pagoda, reared  
above a shrine, appeared,  
inscribed "The Shrine of Lonely Charm".*

*Attracted by its calm,  
Kieu knocked upon the outer door.*

*A nun appeared before  
the gate, and quickly let her in.  
The abbess, named Giac-Duyen,  
on seeing Kieu's monastic robe,  
at once began to probe  
her gently on her origin.*



Mịt mù dặm cát đời cây,  
Tiếng gà điểm nguyệt dẫu giầy cầu sương.  
Canh khuya thân gái dặm trường,  
Phần e đường sá phần thương dãi dầu !  
Trời đông vừa rặng ngàn dâu,  
Bơ vơ nào đã biết dâu là nhà !  
Chùa dâu trông thấy nẻo xa,  
Rành rành Chiêu ẩn am ba chữ bài.  
Xăm xăm gõ mái cửa ngoài,  
Trụ trì nghe tiếng rước mời vào trong.  
Thấy màu ăn mặc nâu sồng,  
Giác Duyên sư trưởng lành lòng liền thương.

*Kieu thought she should begin  
to fabricate a false report  
because the truth, she thought  
was too embarrassing to tell:  
"A humble nun, I dwell  
within a temple in Beijing,  
and have been following  
the Buddha's teaching and his laws.  
She'll pay this shrine of yours  
a visit soon, my abbess said,  
and sent me on ahead  
to bring you these few offerings".  
Kieu took some little things  
a silver bell, a gong of gold -  
which she had carried rolled  
up in her cloak, and these she laid  
upon the floor, displayed  
as if complying with commands.  
Taking them in her hands  
the abbess said "these must have come.  
I feel quite certain, from  
the convent of Hang-Thuy, my friend  
I'd be afraid to send  
you home alone along such ways;  
stay here a few more days  
until the good Hang-Thuy arrives."*

Gạt gùng ngành ngọn cho tường,  
Lạ lòng nàng hãy tìm đường nói quanh :  
    "Tiểu thiền quê ở Bắc-kinh,  
"Quy sư quy Phật tu hành bấy lâu.  
    " Bản sư rồi cũng đến sau,  
"Dạy đưa pháp bảo sang hầu sư huynh,  
    Rày vãng diện hiền rành rành,  
Chuông vàng khánh bạc bên mình giở ra,  
    Xem qua sư mới dạy qua :  
"Phải ni Hằng Thủy là ta hậu tình.  
    "Chín e đường sá một mình,  
"Ồ đây chờ đợi sư huynh ít ngày".

*The nuns' plain ordered lives  
with vegetables for their food  
Kieu shared, and found it good  
and passed the months in calm retreat.*

*She knew and could repeat  
by heart the chanted litanies;  
she always felt at ease  
when tending lamp or incense bowl;  
the fasts and self-control  
were natural, accustomed things.*

*She spent the evenings  
repairing flags and banderoles  
the mornings mending holes  
and tears in manuscript or book;  
she often undertook  
to turn the lamp wicks up at night  
if moonshine gave no light,  
and beat the gong for evensong.*

*It was not very long  
before the other nuns perceived,  
the level she achieved  
in knowledge and in intellect,  
so gave her due respect,  
and treated her with thoughtfulness,  
while Kieu felt less distress,  
more reassured by everything.*

Gởi thân được chốn am mây,  
Muối dưa đắp đổi tháng ngày thong dong.  
Kệ kinh câu cũ thuộc lòng,  
Hương đèn việc trước trai phòng quen tay.  
Sớm khuya lá bối phướn mây,  
Ngọn đèn khêu nguyệt tiếng chày nện sương  
Thấy nàng thông tuệ khác thường,  
Sư càng nể mặt nàng càng vững chân.

*It was the end of spring.  
and flowers were scattered all around  
the temple on the ground,  
while stars were scattered in the sky;  
no cloud was seen on high;  
the air was still, the night seemed calm:  
"The Shrine of Peaceful Charm"  
received a visit from a guest  
"I'm curious and impressed"  
the woman said, while looking well  
at Thuy-Kieu's gong and bell;  
"these look like those at Hoan-Thu's shrine".  
These words could undermine  
Kieu's honesty, in Giac-Duyen's sight,  
and very late that night  
the abbess asked her to explain  
Kieu knew that any vain  
attempt to hide the truth would fail  
and so she told her tale  
from end to end unedited  
"Now all is clear" she said  
"my future. Ma'am, depends on you"  
Not knowing what to do,  
the abbess wavered in dismay;  
her heart swung all the way  
from pitying love to abject fear.*

Cửa thiền vừa cũ cuối xuân,  
Bóng hoa đầy đất vẽ ngân ngang trời.  
Gió quang mây tạnh thanh thời,  
Có người đàn viết lên chơi cửa già.  
Giở đồ chuông khánh xem qua,  
Khen rằng : "Khéo giống của nhà Hoạn nương !"  
Giác Duyên thực ý lo lường,  
Đêm thanh mới hỏi lại nàng trước sau.  
Nghĩ rằng khôn nổi giấu màu  
Sự mình, nàng mới gót đầy bày ngay :  
"Bây giờ sự đã dường này,  
"Phận hèn dù rủi dù may tại người".  
Giác Duyên nghe nói rụng rời,  
Nửa thương nửa sợ bồi hồi chẳng xong.

*"In Buddha's household here"  
she whispered confidentially,  
"we do not wish to be  
intolerant, or to upbraid;  
but I am so afraid  
there might be som calamity,  
and I would hate to see  
you, dear, exposed to new distress.  
Take all that you possess  
and flee from here with utmost speed  
it would be mad indeed  
to wait here for the flood to come".*



Rỉ tai mới kể sự lòng:  
"Ở đây cửa Phật là không hẹp gì.  
"E chẳng những sự bất kỳ,  
"Để nàng cho đến thế thì cũng thương !  
"Lánh xa trước liệu tìm đường,  
"Ngồi chờ nước đến nên đường còn quê".

*A little distance from  
 the temple was the home of one -  
 well known to every nun -  
 who often brought the shrine a coil  
 of incense or some oil;  
 old Bac-Ba was the woman's name;  
 she very quickly came  
 when Giac-Duyen sent and asked her to.  
 The abbess spoke of Kieu  
 her praise was high and positive;  
 then asked Bac-Ba to give  
 the girl a lodging for a while.  
 This quiet domicile  
 Kieu thought of as a breathing-space;  
 how could she in this case  
 foresee that it would go amiss?  
 How could she know that this  
 was just an old procurer's nest?  
 And how could she have guessed  
 that old Bac-Ba had learnt the rule  
 of business in the school  
 that Tu-Ba too had studied in ?  
 On seeing Kieu's fair skin,  
 much brighter far than rouge could paint,  
 she needed great restraint  
 to hide the joy that filled her mind  
 at happening to find  
 these goods to make a profit on.*

Có nhà họ Bạc bên kia.  
Am mây quen lối đi về dầu hương  
Nhấn sang dặng hết mọi đường,  
Dọn nhà hãy tạm cho nàng trú chân.  
Những mừng được chốn an thân,  
Vội vàng nào kịp tính gần tính xa.  
Nào ngờ cùng tổ bọm già,  
Bạc bà học với Tú bà đồng môn !  
Thấy nàng mặt phấn tươi son.  
Mừng thầm được mối bán buôn có lời.

Since Kieu at first had gone  
to stay there, what a fuss was made  
if she had disobeyed  
some trifling order from Bac-Ba  
by nature very far  
from brave, Kieu then felt most upset  
Bac-Ba made many a threat  
to throw Kieu out onto the street,  
then swore that she would beat  
her, if she stayed, until she screamed  
and getting married seemed  
the only way to make her go  
"You're on your own, you know"  
she told the poor girl ruthlessly;  
"your house and family  
are both a thousand miles away!  
And why that nun should say  
nice things about you I can't guess;  
the devil must possess  
your soul, I'd say if she asked me!  
It's just my luck to be  
the one that's plagued by someone bad;  
there's no one else who's mad  
enough to put you up, like me  
As quickly as can be  
you'd better find yourself a man;  
for now, unless you can,  
you'll never get away from here.

Hu không đặt để nên lời,  
Nàng đà nhón nhác rụng rời lấm phen.  
Mụ càng xui giục cho nên,  
Lấy lời hung hiểm ép duyên Châu Trần.  
Rằng : "Nàng muôn dăm một thân,  
"Lại mang lấy tiếng dữ gần lành xa.  
"Khéo oan gia của phá gia,  
"Còn ai dám chừa vào nhà nữa đây  
"Kíp toan kiếm chốn xe dây,  
"Không dung chưa dễ mà bay đường trời!  
Nơi gần thì chẳng tiện nơi,  
"Nơi xa thì chẳng có người nào xa.  
"Này chàng Bạc Hạnh cháu nhà,  
"Cũng trong thân thích ruột rà chẳng ai.  
"Cửa hàng buôn bán châu Thai,  
"Thật thà có một đơn sai chẳng hề.  
"Thế nào nàng cũng phải nghe,  
Thành thân rồi sẽ liệu về châu Thai.

*But how could you find one near?  
 No, here you're too familiar.  
 Then could you find one far  
 away ? No, no one wants you there.  
 But listen, don't despair;  
 at last I've found you just the man;  
 a fellow named Bac-Hanh  
 a quite close relative of mine  
 and owner of a fine  
 old trading house in Taizhou port;  
 with no malicious thought  
 incomparably honest, too.  
 Do what I tell you to;  
 once you have made your wedding vows  
 then you can set up house  
 unrecognised, in Taizhou port;  
 and there you can disport  
 yourself, as free as ships are free  
 that sail the boundless sea;  
 so marry Bac-Hanh like I say.  
 But if you disobey  
 I'll see that's something you'll regret".  
 At such an awful threat  
 Kieu knit her brow, her soul was sore;  
 it seemed she suffered more  
 with every syllable she heard  
 as though each vicious word  
 lashed into her like body blows.*

"Bấy giờ ai lại biết ai,  
Dầu lòng bể rộng sóng dài thênh thênh.  
"Nàng dù quyết chẳng thuận tình,  
"Trái lời nẻo trước lụy mình đến sau".  
Nàng càng mặt ủ mày chau,  
Càng nghe mẹ nói càng đau như dần.  
Nghĩ mình túng đất sẩy chân,  
Thế cùng, nàng mới xa gần thở than:  
"Thiếp như con én lạc đàn,  
"Phải cung rày đã sợ làn cây cong!  
Cùng đường dù tính chữ tòng,  
"Biết người biết mặt biết lòng làm sao?  
"Nữa khi muôn một thế nào,  
"Bán hùm buôn sói chắc vào lưng đâu?  
Dù ai lòng có sở cầu,  
"Tâm mình xin quyết với nhau một lời.  
Chứng minh có đất có trời,  
"Bấy giờ vượt bể ra khơi quản gì?"

*In seeking some repose  
she now had fallen in a pit;  
how to escape from it  
she wondered, as she sadly sighed.  
"Your servant" she replied  
"is like a swallow, lost and dazed  
which, having once been grazed  
by one swift arrow from abow  
is scared to see below  
the shadow of a curving bough  
so if I must allow  
myself to be once more a bride,  
then how can I decide  
the nature of the heart and head  
of him I am to wed  
when I don't even know his face?  
A girl who will embrace  
an unknown husband is as rash  
as one who buys for cash  
a tiger or a dancing bear  
and is there anywhere  
that I could turn if things went wrong?  
If someone comes along  
who really wants to marry me,  
please ask him to agree  
to come sincerely to this house;  
for if our nuptial vows  
are witnessed by the Earth and Sky,  
why should I care if I  
must cross the ocean's wide extent?*



*This statement of consent  
the aged crone at once relayed  
to young Bac-Hanh, who made  
his preparations straight away  
Old Bac-Ba's house that day  
filled up with people everywhere  
who bustled here and there  
preparing for the wedding day  
they swept the dirt away,  
set up the altar, cleaned the brass.  
And so it came to pass  
that when the time had come to fix  
and light the incense sticks,  
young Bac-Hanh stumbled to his knees  
and to the deities  
he mumbled through a muddled prayer.  
The vows they had to swear  
were duly made by bride and groom;  
then in their curtained room  
the final nuptial rite took place  
The couple in this case  
all felt, were well and truly wed  
and so next day they led  
them in procession forth to board  
a junk which had been moored  
in readiness; when they were in  
it sped, like leaves that spin  
before the wind to Taizhou port.*

Được lời mụ mới ra đi,  
Mách tin họ Bạc tức thì sắm sanh.  
Một nhà dọn dẹp linh đình,  
Quét sân đặt trác rửa bình thấp nhang.  
Bạc sinh quỳ xuống vội vàng,  
Quá lời nguyện hết Thành hoàng Thổ công.  
Trước sân lòng đã giải lòng,  
Trong màn làm lễ tơ hồng kết duyên.  
Thành thân mới rước xuống thuyền,  
Thuận buồm một lá xuôi miền châu Thai.

*There, when the boat was brought  
to shore Bac-Hanh without delay  
    arranged to take a way  
along which he had strayed before;  
    that universal sore  
the shops that trade in human flesh  
    the dens which can enmesh  
    a girl in endless slavery.  
    A trader came to see  
the merchandise he had to sell;  
    the buyer knew him well  
the money offered him was good;  
    much haggling, though, ensued  
because Bac-Hanh would not agree  
    on any lower fee  
than ten times what he paid for Kieu.  
    Then all he had to do  
at last was go and hire a chair  
and two men who would bear  
her to the den without delay,  
and then he slipped away -  
his nature "faithless" like his name.*

Thuyền vừa đỗ bến thành thôi,  
Bạc sinh lên trước tìm nơi mọi ngày.  
Cũng nhà hành viện xưa nay,  
Cũng phường bán thịt cũng tay buôn người.  
Xem người định giá vừa rồi,  
Mỗi hàng một đã ra mười thì buông.  
Mượn người thuê kiệu rước nàng,  
Bạc đem mặt bạc kiếm đường cho xa!

*Kieu's flower-decked chair soon came  
to rest; they set it down before  
a grand imposing door  
adorned with flowerets carved in stone.*

*At once a wrinkled crone,  
rushed out to greet the new recruit.*

*The aged prostitute  
then led her to the central hall  
and asked her first of all  
to bow before the household god*

*Kieu saw it was - how odd -  
the snow-white eyebrowed deity!*

*Then surely this must be  
another red-light neighbourhood!  
at once Kieu understood;  
but how could she escape this cage?*

*She cursed the star, in rage  
beneath whose influence she was born.*

*For I had only torn  
myself away, a little while  
ago, from all that's vile  
and now I'm back in its employ,  
as though I were a toy  
that's dallied with by Destiny.*

*The prospect wearies me  
of living such a life again;  
what good are talents, when  
they make the heavens envious?*

Kiếp hoa đặt trước thềm hoa,  
Bên trong thấy một mụ ra vội vàng,  
Đưa nàng vào lạy gia đường,  
Cũng thần mày trắng cũng phường lầu xanh!  
Thoắt trông nàng đã biết tình,  
Chim lồng khôn lẽ cái mình bay cao.  
Chém cha cái số hoa đào,  
Gỡ ra rồi lại buộc vào như chơi!  
Nghĩ đời mà ngán cho đời,  
Tài tình chi lắm cho trời đất ghen!  
Tiếc thay nước đã đánh phen,  
Mà cho bùn lại vẩn lên mấy lần!  
Hồng quân với khách hồng quần,  
Đã xoay đến thế còn vờn chưa tha.  
Lỡ từ lạc bước, bước ra,  
Cái thân liệu những từ nhà liệu đi.  
Đầu xanh đã tội tình gì?  
Má hồng đèn quá nửa thì chưa thôi.  
Biết thân chạy chẳng khỏi trời,  
Cũng liều mặt phấn cho rồi ngày xanh.

. \*

*Why after tedious  
attempts with alum in the flood  
to clear life's stream of mud  
do murky clouds befoul it still?  
Why show such cruel will  
Creator, to the fair of face?  
When I am crushed, why place  
on me a further weight of woe?  
When I was forced to go  
from home, I was resigned to fate;  
but at that early date -  
what ill can I have done by then  
so serious that when  
the sacrifice of half my years  
is made already tears  
of anguish once again must flow?  
I can't escape, I know  
from Fate, and nothing will suffice  
except the sacrifice  
of all my beauty and my youth!*

*Since she arrived, in truth,  
Thuy-Kieu had passed full many a night  
beneath the moon's clear light  
while cooling breezes wafted her.*

*A certain customer,  
fresh from the frontier, called one night  
What an imposing sight!*

*Strong-jawed, and tiger-like moustached,  
brows like two silkworms arched,  
broad shouldered, and extremely tall.*

*His fame was known to all;  
in boxing and in cudgel-play  
he always won the day;  
then he was skilled in strategy,  
of great temerity  
and fearless when the risks were high.*

*The man was named Tu-Hai  
and though a Cantonese by birth  
he counted all the earth  
and every river his domain;  
and over each terrain  
he made his solitary way  
and carried, day by day  
naught but a sabre and a lute.*

*He heard of Kieu's repute  
in courts of pleasure straight away.*

*For anyone to say  
how such a man could fall in love*



Lần thâu gió mát trăng thanh,  
Bỗng đâu có khách biên đình sang chơi.  
Râu hùm hàm én mày ngài,  
Vai năm tấc rộng thân mười thước cao.  
Đường đường một đấng anh hào,  
Cón quyền hơn sức lược thao gồm tài.  
Đội trời đạp đất ở đời,  
Họ Từ tên Hải vốn người Việt Đông  
Giang hồ quen thú vẫy vùng,  
Gươm đàn nửa gánh non sông một chèo.  
Qua chơi nghe tiếng nàng Kiều,  
Tấm lòng nhi nữ cũng xiêu anh hùng.  
Thiếp danh đưa đến lầu hồng,  
Hai bên cùng liếc hai lòng cùng ưa.  
Từ rằng: "Tâm phúc tương cờ,  
"Phải người trăng gió vật vờ hay sao?  
"Bấy lâu nghe tiếng má đào,  
"Mắt xanh chẳng để ai vào có không?"

*within a matter of  
an hour, with such a girl, was hard;  
he had his calling card  
delivered to her room by hand;  
two pairs of eyes met, and -  
their two hearts melted into one.*

*"A friendship has begun  
of souls and hearts", she heard him say*

*"I have not come to play;  
but I was told that you were fair.*

*Till now, indeed, is there  
no man that's good enough for you?*

*I too have seen that few  
fine, noble hearts are to be found;  
these men I see around -  
like cage-birds or exotic fish -  
are they the sort you wish  
to have for daily company?*

*Kieu answered modestly*

*"You flatter me; I'd be a churl  
if I, a wretched girl,  
despised some section of mankind;  
what touchstone could I find  
to test the worth of any man  
distinguishing who can  
be safely trusted with my soul?*

*And as for those who stroll  
in boldly through the front door here*

"Một đời được mấy anh hùng,  
"Bõ chi cá chậu chim lồng mà chơi!"  
Nàng rằng: "Người dạy quá lời,  
"Thân này còn dám xem ai làm thường!"  
"Chút riêng chọn đá thử vàng,  
"Biết đâu mà gởi can trường vào đâu?  
"Còn như vào trước ra sau,  
"Ai cho kén chọn vàng thau tại mình!"  
Từ rằng: "Lời nói hữu tình,  
"Khiến người lại nhớ câu Bình Nguyên Quân.  
"Lại đây xem lại cho gần,  
"Phỏng tin được một vài phần hay không?"  
Thưa rằng: "Lượng cả bao dong,  
"Tấn Dương được thấy mây rồng có phen.  
"Rộng thương cỏ nội hoa hèn,  
"Chút thân bèo bọt dám phiền mai sau!"

*and slink out through the rear,  
what right have I to pick and choose  
between them, as I use  
to separate cheap brass from gold?  
How true! The story told  
about Lord Ping-Yuan comes to mind  
who said he could not find  
a single sympathetic guest"*  
*Tu-Hai exclaimed, impressed;  
"Come, let me look at you, my dear  
sit close beside me here  
I feel I can confide in you"*  
*"You are too kind "said Kieu;  
"one day I'll see you, like a proud  
bold dragon on a cloud,  
enthroned at Xinyang in great power.  
Then, if this humble flower  
should dare to ask for help from you  
remember poor Thuy-Kieu  
and pity her in her distress".*

*On hearing her express  
her feelings so submissively  
he smiled approvingly;  
"Ah, those who understand me, Kieu,  
as you do are so few!  
I praise your perspicacity  
that you should see in me  
a man who means one day to rise  
to greatness, while he lies  
still struggling hard and drowned in dust.  
One single phrase of trust  
from you, and I could plainly see  
that you believe in me;  
and even when I earn a clear  
ten thousand tons a year  
of rice, and own four score or more  
strong chariots of war  
you'll be for evermore my bride".  
As Tu-Hai thus replied  
they knew their souls had instantly  
reached perfect harmony;  
whenever destiny intends  
two persons to be friends  
one need not beg the other's love.  
With the assistance of  
a marriage-broker, Tu-Hai paid  
hundreds of taels, which made  
an ample compensation for*

*Nghe lời, vừa ý gật đầu,  
Cười rằng: "Tri kỷ trước sau mấy người?  
"Khen cho con mắt tinh đời,  
"Anh hùng đoán giữa trần ai mới già!  
"Một lời đã biết đến ta,  
"Muôn chung nghìn tú cũng là có nhau!"  
Hai bên ý hợp tâm đầu,  
Khi thân chẳng lọ là cầu mới thân!  
Ngỏ lời nói với băng nhân,  
Tiền trăm lại cứ nguyên ngân phát hoàn.  
Buồng riêng sửa chốn thanh nhàn,  
Đặt giường thái bảo vẩy màn bát tiên.  
Trai anh hùng gái thuyền quyền,  
Phỉ nguyền sánh phượng đẹp duyên cưỡi rồng.*

\*

what, several months before  
the brothel-keeper first had spent.  
Some private rooms for rent  
were found, tucked down a quiet street  
and there at last complete  
arrangements for the day were made;  
a marriage-bed inlaid  
with seven sorts of precious stone  
a curtain round it, sewn  
with eight gods in embroideries.  
And thus, in wedded bliss  
Courage and Charm were joined in one.

*But when six months were gone  
the spirit of adventure seemed  
to fire Tu-Hai, who dreamed  
again of some far lonely shore  
and saw him self once more  
with sword in hand, ride like the wind  
Kieu guessed her husband's mind  
and said, "the duty of a wife  
to follow, all her life,  
her man, where'er he goes, is clear.  
If you are leaving here  
please do not go without your bride".  
"Since now," Tu-Hai replied,  
we think alike on everything,  
why are you copying  
the way the common women plead?  
Not till the day I lead  
a hundred thousand soldier's home  
shaking the heaven's dome  
with clashing gong and cymbal's sound  
and darkening the ground  
with shadows that my banners cast  
when I can show at last  
what sort of man you married Kieu  
shall I acknowledge you  
and let you live with me once more.  
But now, between the Four  
Great Seas that gird this world around*



Nửa năm hương lửa đương nồng,  
Trượng phu thoắt đã động lòng bốn phương.  
Trống vơi trời bể mệnh mang,  
Thanh gươm yên ngựa lên đường thẳng giương.  
Nàng rằng: "Phận gái chữ tòng,  
"Chàng đi thiếp cũng một lòng xin đi".  
Tù rằng: "Tâm phúc tương tri,  
"Sao chưa thoát khỏi nữ nhi thường tình?  
"Bao giờ mười vạn tinh binh,  
"Tiếng chiêng dậy đất bóng tinh rợp đường.  
"Làm cho rõ mặt phi thường,  
"Bấy giờ ta sẽ rước nàng nghi gia.  
"Bằng nay bốn bể không nhà,  
"Theo càng thêm bạn biết là đi đâu?  
"Đành lòng chờ đó ít lâu,  
"Chầy chăng là một năm sau, vội gì?"  
Quyết lời dứt áo ra đi,  
Gió đưa bằng tiệp đã lìa dặm khơi.

no home have I yet found  
to dwell in, even modestly  
thus if you come with me  
it would be troublesome to keep  
on finding rooms to sleep;  
so wait for me a while, my dear  
be patient; in a year  
at most, I will have come for you".  
Then, like the eagle who  
when favourable breezes start  
wastes no time to depart  
Tu-Hai set off, forsaking Kieu,  
to find adventures new  
as soon as he made up his mind.

*Poor Kieu remained behind  
a screen of apricot-tree boughs  
alone within her house  
in a securely bolted room.  
Untrodden, like a tomb  
the courtyard stones grew green with moss;  
green grass grew all across  
the path between the willow-trees.  
Sad distant memories  
of all the elms at home she knew  
returned to trouble Kieu  
how far away her village seemed!  
Homesick and sad, she dreamed  
of where her aged parents dwelt;  
perhaps the grief they felt  
when she had left had waned by now.  
The time had flown somehow  
ten years had passed, of good and ill;  
if they were living still  
they must be wrinkled now and grey.  
She wept by night and day  
remembering her first true love.  
Still, like the flower of  
a lotus, torn off from its root  
her love was resolute  
and bloomed for Kim unseen by him.  
Now, if Thuy-Van and Kim  
picked up the threads of broken love,*

Nàng từ chiếc bóng song mai,  
Đêm thâu đặng dăng nhặt cài then máy.  
Sán rêu chẳng vẽ dấu giày,  
Cổ cao hơn thước liễu gãy vài phân.  
Đoái trông muôn dặm tử phần,  
Hồn què theo ngọn mây Tần xa xa.  
Xót thay huyền cỗi xuân già,  
Tấm lòng thương nhớ biết là có người?  
Chốc đà mười mấy năm trời,  
Còn ra khi đã da mồi tóc sương.  
Tiếc thay chút nghĩa cũ càng,  
Dấu là ngó ý còn vương tơ lòng.  
Duyên em dù nói chỉ hồng,  
May ra khi đã tay bằng tay mang.  
Tấc lòng cố quốc tha hương,  
Đường kia nổi nọ ngổn ngang bời bời.  
Cánh hồng bay bổng tuyệt vời,  
Đã mòn con mắt phương trời dăm dăm.

*she must be mother of  
a family often, she mused.  
Her brain became confused;  
nostalgic thoughts within her mind  
of loved ones left behind;  
the present, as a lonely wife;  
and in her recent life  
adventures, grief, misfortunes, pain  
grew like a tangled skein  
of mixed impressions blurred and dim.  
And still she worshipped Kim  
and pictured him as some great bird  
which, circling heavenward  
is never heard about again.*

*Her heart was filled with pain  
when in the region round about  
the fires of war broke out  
and stench of battle filled the air.  
Fighting was everywhere  
the rivers full of piracy;  
as far as eye could see  
the roads were thronged with armoured men.  
Some friends and neighbours then  
appealed to Kieu to come away  
and find a place to stay  
until the fighting should abate.  
"I promised I would wait  
for Tu-Hair here". Thuy-Kieu replied,  
"I will not go and hide,  
however great the dangers be -  
She paused uncertainly  
and stood there, wishing that she knew  
exactly what to do  
when of a sudden, as she sighed  
she looked and saw outside  
that shapes of many standards stirred.  
A strident voice she heard  
give orders through a megaphone;  
a ring of troops was thrown  
around the house, in suits of mail.  
She hears the soldiers hail  
the servants: "Is the lady here?"*

Đêm ngày lũng những âm thầm,  
Lửa binh đâu đã âm ầm một phương.  
Ngất trời sát khí mơ màng,  
Đầy sông kinh ngạc chật đường giáp binh.  
Người quen thuộc kẻ chung quanh,  
Nhủ nàng hãy tạm lánh mình một nơi.  
Nàng rằng: "Trước đã hẹn lời,  
"Dấu trong nguy hiểm dám rời ước xưa!"  
Còn đang dùng dằng ngăn ngại,  
Mái ngoài đã thấy bóng cờ tiếng la.  
Giáp binh kéo đến quanh nhà,  
Đồng thanh cùng gọi: "Nào là phu nhân?"  
Hai bên mười vị tướng quân,  
Đặt gươm cỡi giáp trước sân khấu đầu.  
Cung nga thể nữ nổi sau,  
Rằng: "Vâng lệnh chỉ rước châu vu quy".  
Sấn sàng phượng liễn loan nghi,  
Hoa quan chấp chới hà y rõ ràng.  
Dựng cờ nổi trống lên đường,  
Trúc tư nổi trước kiệu vàng kéo sau.

*Ten generals appear  
fall in in twos, go on to doff  
their swords, and - like and honour guard  
formed up there in the yard  
prostrate themselves with humble bows.*

*There came into the house  
some maids-in-waiting, dressed in red  
they also bowed, and said,*

*"Now, by His Majesty's decree  
we ask Your Majesty  
to grace your royal husband's court".*

*The royal coach was brought  
a phoenix carved upon each door,  
and very many more  
embroidered in the rich brocade;  
the coachman was arrayed  
in rose-red robes and feathered hat.*

*Drums beat their rat-tat-tat,  
the long procession filed away  
with banners' brave display  
and music loud for all to hear  
and bringing up the rear  
the gold imperial coach-and-four.*



金瓶梅



Hỏa bài tiền lộ ruổi mau,  
Nam đình nghe động trống châu đại doanh.  
Kéo cờ lũy phát súng thành,  
Từ công ra ngựa thân nghênh cửa ngoài.  
Rõ mình là vẻ cân đai,  
Hãy còn hàm én mảy ngài như xưa.  
Cười rằng: "Cá nước duyên ưa!  
"Nhớ lời nói những bao giờ hay không?  
"Anh hùng mới biết anh hùng,  
"Rày xem phỏng đã cam lòng ấy chưa?"  
Nàng rằng: "Chút phận ngày thơ,  
"Cũng may dây cái được nhờ bóng cây!  
"Đến bấy giờ mới thấy đây,  
"Mà lòng đã chắc những ngày một hai!"

*So Tu-Hai smiled at Kieu  
and laughing happily they went  
inside a flower-strewn tent  
where hand in hand their thoughts were shared.  
A banquet was prepared  
to entertain the soldiery  
melodious harmony  
of martial music all around  
was blended with the sound  
of rattling battle-drums all day.  
Ah, who would dare to say,  
when so much grief and misery  
had come to Kieu, that she  
did not deserve this praise and fame?  
Day after day the flame  
of love burned brighter, clearer still.*

Cùng nhau trông mặt cả cười,  
Đan tay về chốn trướng mai tỵ tình.  
Tiệc bày thưởng tướng khao binh,  
Thì thùng trống trận rập rình nhạc quân.  
Vinh hoa bỏ lúc phong trần,  
Chữ tình ngày lại thêm xuân một ngày.

*Kieu often used to fill  
the leisure hours, when she thought fit  
by telling, bit by bit  
her husband all the misery  
in Yixian or Wuxi  
she had endured before they met  
how some had tricked her, yet  
some helped her when she was distressed.  
Though I have found some rest,  
she said, "two things which I have willed  
remain still unfulfilled  
my vengeance and my gratitude".*

*Tu-Hai in furious mood  
heard what misfortunes had been hers,  
and picked some officers  
whom he despatched with chosen troops.*

*They set off in two groups,  
each of which carried at its head  
a banner coloured red  
half each for Wuxi and Yixian,  
there to search out, and then  
arrest the villains on their list.*

*When Tu-Hai had dismissed  
the cavalry, he promptly sent  
a herald off who went  
to have the local mandarin  
protect young Thuc within  
his care, and all Thuc's family.*

Trong quân có lúc vui vầy,  
Thong dong mới kể sự ngày hàn vi:  
"Khi Vô Tích khi Lâm Tri,  
"Nơi thì lừa đảo nơi thì xót thương.  
Tấm thân rày đã nhẹ nhàng,  
"Chút còn ân oán đời đường chưa xong"  
Từ công nghe nói thủy chung,  
Bất bình nổi trận dùng dùng sấm vang.  
Nghiêm quân tuyển tướng sẵn sàng,  
Dưới cờ một lệnh vọi vàng ruổi sao.  
Ba quân chỉ ngọn cờ đào,  
Đạo ra Vô tích đạo vào Lâm Tri.  
Mấy người phụ bạc xưa kia,  
Chiếu danh tâm nã bắt về hỏi tra.  
Lại sai lệnh tiễn truyền qua,  
Giữ giàng họ Thúc một nhà cho yên.  
Mụ quân gia vãi Giác Duyên,  
Cũng sai lệnh tiễn đem tin rước mời.

*Another went to see  
the aged governess who ran  
the house of Mrs Hoan  
and Abbess Giac-Duyen; and these two  
were then invited to  
the royal palace of Tu-Hai.  
These proclamations by  
the King expained to all his men  
what had occurred, and then  
each heart was filled with boiling rage  
each soldier and each page  
obeyed his orders willingly.*





*How unremittingly  
does Heaven's vengeful wrath unfold!  
How dreadful to behold  
the culprits caught in one fell swoop!  
The garrison of troops  
paraded, armed with spears and swords;  
surrounded by these hordes  
a regiment of infantry  
formed up attentively  
in rings around the bodyguard.  
They filled the castle yard,  
imposing and impeccable,  
with great uncheckable  
bronze cannon drawn up all around  
and darkening the ground  
with shadows that their standards made.  
An open tent, arrayed  
with tiger-skins, was standing where  
enthroned upon a chair  
the King and Queen sat side by side.  
The echoes had not died  
after a roll upon the drum  
when voices cried, "They've come!  
The prisoners! outside the gate!  
"The captives now await  
your judgement", said Tu-Hai to Kieu;  
"full powers I grant to you  
for vengeance or for gratitude".*

Thệ sư kể hết mọi lời,  
Lòng lòng cũng giận người người chấp uy.  
Đạo trời báo phục chìn ghê,  
Khéo thay một mẻ tóm về đây nơi.  
Quân trung, gương lớn giáo dài,  
Vệ trong thị lập cơ ngoài song phi.  
Sẵn sàng tề chỉnh uy nghi,  
Bác đồng chặt đất tinh kỳ rợp sân.  
Trướng hùm mở giữa trung quán,  
Từ công sánh với phu nhân cùng ngồi.  
Tiên nghiêm, trống chũm dúa hồi,  
Điểm danh trước dẫn chực ngoài cửa viên.  
Từ rằng: "Ân oán hai bên,  
"Mặc nàng xử quyết báo đền cho mình"  
Nàng rằng: "Muôn cậy uy linh,  
"Hãy xin báo đáp ân tình cho phu.  
"Báo ân rồi sẽ trả thù:  
Từ rằng: "Việc ấy để cho mặc nàng".

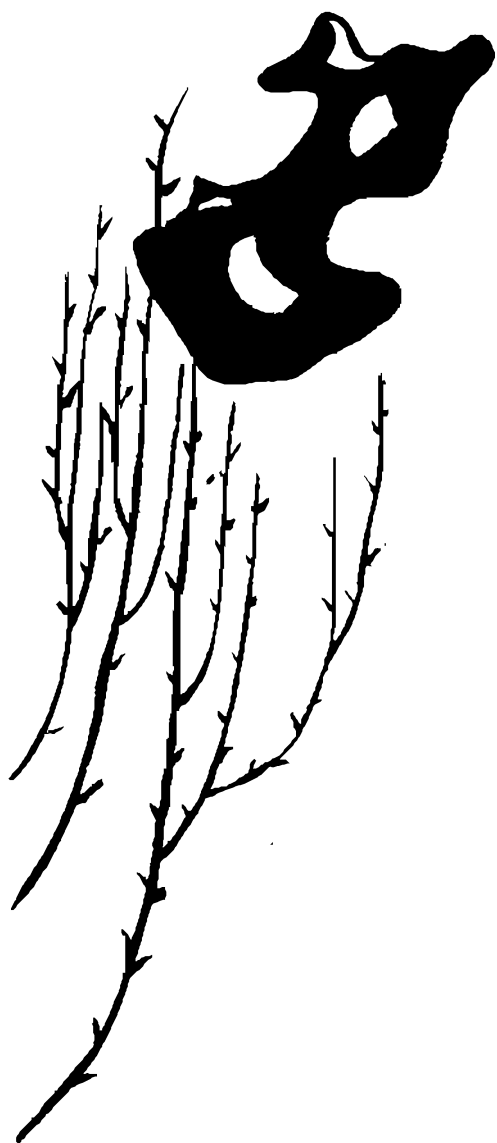
*"First let me make renewed  
expression of my thanks" said Kieu:  
"please grant permission to  
reward my benefactors first  
Then I will quench my thirst  
for proper vengeance by and by".  
"I yield you" said Tu-Hai  
"Full powers to settle this affair".*



*Kieu sent a swordsman where  
young Thuc had been compelled to wait  
outside the castle gate,  
he came escorted by the guard  
and trembling in the yard.  
He blushed beneath the soldiers' gaze.  
"My debt to you outweighs  
a thousand mountains", Kieu began;  
"look well and tell me: can  
you still remember me; whom when  
we met in far Yixian  
you once redeemed with tender love?  
Like morning star above  
and evening star, which never meet,  
we never could complete  
the lifelong match which was our aim.  
You know who was to blame  
for that; I will not judge a friend;  
and so I wish to send  
three hundred rolls of silk brocade,  
upon which I have laid  
a thousand pounds of silver, too,  
back to your home with you,  
a token of my gratitude.  
As for your wife, so shrewd  
and devilish in mischief, now  
she will discover how  
a victim treats a captured thief!*

Cho gươm mời đến Thúc lang,  
Mặt như chàm đỏ mình dường dễ run.  
Nàng rằng: "Nghĩa nặng nghìn non,  
"Lâm Tri người cũ, chàng còn nhớ không?  
"Sâm Thương chẳng vẹn chữ tòng.  
"Tại ai, há dám phụ lòng cố nhân?  
"Gấm trăm cuốn bạc nghìn cân,  
"Tạ lòng để xứng báo ân gọi là.  
"Vợ chàng quý quái tình ma,  
"Phen này kẻ cắp bà già gặp nhau!  
"Kiến bò miệng chén chửa lâu,  
"Mùi sâu cũng trả nghĩa sâu cho vừa!"  
Thúc sinh trông mặt bấy giờ,  
Mồ hôi chàng đã như mưa ướt đầm.  
Lòng riêng mừng sợ khôn cầm,  
Sợ thay mà lại mừng thầm cho ai.

*She'll run to seek relief  
just like an ant around a cup;  
she'll fail: I'll soon think up  
some vengeance for her cruel trick."*  
*Young Thuc looked very sick  
great beads of perspiration streamed  
all down his face; they seemed  
like drops of rain as down they rolled.*  
*He only just controlled  
his joy and apprehension now;  
an awful fear of how  
his wife would suffer; joy for Kieu.*





Kieu next invited two  
 old ladies - first the one who ran  
 the house of Mrs Hoan,  
 and Abbess Giac-Duyen from the calm  
 of "Shrine of Lonely Charm"  
 to take the most important place.  
 She lifted from her face  
 the veil she wore, and held their hands.  
 Though free now from the bands  
 of slavery, "Slave flower" am I;  
 known also by and by",  
 she said, "as "Sister Crystal Spring".  
 And so, remembering  
 my miserable days of old,  
 though mountains made of gold  
 could not repair your care for me,  
 my thanks will have to be  
 these paltry thousand ounces each.  
 In ancient tales they teach  
 of Mother Xieu, who sheltered one  
 who, when he had begun  
 to prosper, wished to pay her back.  
 Like him, I find no sack  
 is made that's big enough to hold  
 an equal worth of gold  
 that balances a pitying heart!"  
 Not knowing where to start,  
 the women could not speak a word,  
 but thought of what they heard,  
 half happy and half terrified.  
 "Remain here at my side",  
 Kieu said, "and see my vengeance wrought!"

*Mụ già, sư trưởng thứ hai.*  
*Thoát đưa đến trước vội mời lên trên.*  
*Đặt tay, mở mắt cho nhìn:*  
*"Hoa nô kia với Trạc Tuyền cũng tôi!*  
*"Nhớ khi lỡ bước sẩy vời,*  
*"Non vàng chưa để đền bồi tám thương.*  
*"Nghìn vàng gọi chút lễ thường,*  
*"Mà lòng Phiếu mẫu mấy vàng cho cân!"*  
*Hai người trông mặt tằn ngần,*  
*Nửa phần khiếp sợ nửa phần mừng vui.*  
*Nàng rằng: "Xin hãy rón gối,*  
*"Xem cho rõ mặt biết tôi báo thù!"*

*The prisoners were brought  
by sentries to the courtyard, there  
to be examined, where,  
standing behind the Emperor,  
the executioner  
had drawn the heavy sword he used.*

*The principal accused  
was summoned with a shout, "Hoan-Thu!"*  
*Kieu coldly greeted her.*  
*"Well, well, what brings you here today?*  
*Few women I should say,*  
*there are who could with you compare;*  
*not many had so rare*  
*a face, before, and now, a heart!*  
*Reflect then for a start*  
*that handsome is as handsome does.*

*Your unfair deeds, because  
your face was fair, seem doubly dire."*  
*As though she might expire  
from fright that moment, Hoan-Thu went  
and fell before her tent  
to plead with Kieu with all her art*  
*"I know no female heart  
that's wholly free from jealousy,  
and so it is with me.*  
*Consider carefully my case;*  
*when in the holy place  
you copied holy poetry,*

Kíp truyền chư tướng hiến phù,  
Lại đem các tích phạm tù hậu tra.  
Dưới cờ, gương tuốt nắp ra,  
Chính danh thủ phạm tên là Hoạn thư.  
Thoắt trông, nàng đã chào thưa:  
"Tiểu thư cũng có bây giờ đến đây!  
"Đàn bà để có mấy tay,  
"Đời xưa mấy mặt đời này mấy gan!  
"Để dàng là thói hồng nhan,  
"Càng cay nghiệt lắm càng oan trái nhiều!"  
Hoạn thư hồn lạc phách xiêu,  
Khẩu đầu dưới trướng lựa điều kêu ca,  
Rằng: "Tôi chút dạ đàn bà,  
"Ghen tuông thì cũng người ta thường tình.  
"Nghĩ cho khi các viết kinh,  
"Với khi khởi cửa dĩa tình chẳng theo.  
"Lòng riêng, riêng những kính yêu,  
"Chồng chung chưa để ai chiều cho ai!

*and when you tried to flee,  
if I sent no one to pursue,  
the reason was, dear Kieu,  
respect for you eithin my mind.*

*But if two women find  
that they are wed to but one man,  
what normal woman can  
consent to give her man away?*

*Sincerely then, today  
I humbly beg Your Majesty  
at last to pardon me  
for all the harm I did to you."*

*"It's as they say", said Kieu  
"You're clever and you know a lot -  
if I forgave you, what  
a stroke of luck for you, indeed!*

*And if I paid no heed  
to your appeal and punished you  
I would be said to do  
a very mean and shabby thing.*

*Thus, by acknowledging  
your wrongs, you earn yourself release."*

*She told the guard to cease  
detaining Hoan-Thu there and then;  
Hoan-Thu fell down again  
in gratitude before Kieu's tent.*

*"Trót lòng gây việc chông gai,  
"Còn nhờ lượng bể thương bài nào chẳng!"  
Khen cho: "Thật đã nên rằng,  
"Khôn ngoan đến mực nói năng phải lời.  
"Tha ra thì cũng may đời,  
"Làm ra thì cũng ra người nhỏ nhen.  
"Đã lòng tri quá thì nên,  
"Truyền quân lệnh xuống trước tiên tha ngay".*

More prisoners were sent  
 into the courtyard, firmly chained;  
 "O Heaven", Kieu exclaimed.  
 "What can it be to do with me  
 if Thou cause injury  
 to those who injured others here?  
 The first two to appear  
 were old Bac-Ba, and young Bac-Hanh  
 her nephew, worthless man!  
 Chained on their left were Ung and Khuyen;  
 old Tu-Ba, Ma-Giam-Sinh  
 and So-Khanh, on the other side.  
 It could not be denied  
 these villains certainly deserved  
 the punishment reserved  
 for them, and so without demur  
 the executioner  
 was told to use them as was right.  
 All who beheld the sight  
 were terrified; the courtyard filled  
 with streams of blood which spilled  
 from battered flesh before their eyes;  
 none failed to recognise  
 that Heaven settles every debt,  
 and those who cheat forget  
 that death will cheat them of their gain.  
 Those crooked folk in vain  
 cried out for pity, each alone  
 must reap what he has sown:  
 all of the army, gathered for,  
 the execution, saw  
 clear justice done on doers of ill.

Tạ lòng, lạy trước sân mây,  
Cửa viên lại dặt một dây dẫn vào,  
Nàng rằng : "Lồng lộng trời cao!  
"Hại nhân, nhân hại sự nào tại ta!  
"Trước là Bạc Hạnh, Bạc bà,  
"Bên là Ung, Khuyển, bên là Sở Khanh,  
"Tú bà với Mã Giám Sinh,  
"Các tên tội ấy đáng tình còn sao?"  
Lệnh quân truyền xuống nội đao,  
Thề sao thì lại cứ sao gia hình.  
Máu rơi thịt nát tan tành,  
Ai ai trông thấy hồn kinh phách rời.  
Cho hay muôn sự tại trời,  
Phụ người chẳng bỏ khi người phụ ta!  
Mấy người bạc ác tình ma,  
Mình làm mình chịu kêu mà ai thương!  
Ba quán đông mặt pháp trường,  
Thanh thiên bạch nhật rõ ràng cho coi.



*The abbess, waiting till  
Kieu's gratitude and vengeance too  
were done, took leave of Kieu,  
her benefactor, straight away.*

*Kieu answered. "Such a day  
when old friends meet, and then  
are forced to part again  
comes seldom in a thousand years.*

*Like mist which disappears  
for ever, of like floating flowers  
which for a few short hours  
drift side by side, but cannot stay,  
we must be on our way;*

*how shall I find my crane again  
upon so vast a plain,  
one cloud upon a mountain side?*

*Giac-Duyen at once replied,  
"Oh, no, we shall not have to wait  
for long; it is our fate  
in just five years to meet again.*

*I well remember, when  
I was a pilgrim far away,  
I met a nun one day*

*whose name was Tam-Hop, and it seems  
that in her mystic dreams  
she has the gift of prophecy.*

*This nun foretold for me  
when we would meet again, my dear*

Việc nàng báo phục vừa rồi,  
Giả Duyên vội đã gởi lời từ quy.  
Nàng rằng: "Thiên tử nhất thì,  
"Cố nhân đã dễ mấy khi bàn hoàn.  
"Rồi đây bèo hợp mây tan,  
"Biết đâu hạc nội mây ngàn là đâu!"  
Sư rằng: "Cũng chẳng mấy lâu,  
"Trong năm năm lại gặp nhau đó mà.  
"Nhớ ngày hành cước phương xa,  
"Gặp sư Tam Hợp vốn là tiên tri.  
"Bảo cho hội ngộ chi kỳ,  
"Năm nay là một, nửa thì năm năm.  
"Mới hay tiền định chẳng lầm,  
"Đã tin điều trước ắt nhằm việc sau.  
"Còn nhiều ân ái với nhau,  
"Cơ duyên nào đã hết đâu vội gì?"  
Nàng rằng: "Tiền định tiên tri,  
"Lời sư đã dạy ắt thì chẳng sai.

*the first, this very year  
the next time, just five years from now.*

*Well, we have witnessed how  
her first prediction has come true;  
does it seem right to you  
to doubt her second prophecy?*

*Remorseless Destiny  
has brought us here and bound us by  
sincere affection; why  
should Fate in haste divide us, Kieu?*

*Kieu thought, then said "I too  
believe prophetic souls can make  
predictions; no mistake  
is possible in what she said.*

*If ever you are led  
to her again, I beg of you,  
enquire concerning Kieu  
if she has any more to tell?*

*The abbess bade farewell  
saying that she would do her best  
to meet with Kieu's request;  
they parted friends, as they had met.*

*"Họa bao giờ có gặp người,  
"Vì tôi cậy hỏi một lời chung thân".  
Giác Duyên vâng dặn ân cần,  
Tạ từ thoát đã đời chân cỏi ngoài.*

*Kieu, having paid her debt  
of vengeance and of gratitude  
felt all the multitude  
of past injustices was dead.  
She bowed herself and said.  
"My husband, noble lord Tu-Hai,  
oh, how could such as I,  
as fragile as a willow tree  
have dreamt that I would see  
a day as happy as today  
on which is rolled away  
the weight with which my poor heart groans?*

*Engraved upon my bones,  
inscribed for ever in my heart,  
there shines like gold your part  
in this, protecting, aiding me,  
and though my life should be  
required of me as sacrifice,  
yet this would not suffice  
to pay off gratitude's great debt  
for kindness, higher yet  
than clouds that cluster in the sky!"*

*"Till now", replied Tu-Hai  
not many of the well-renowned  
in history have found  
as I have, in a wife a friend  
on whom I can depend  
to understand me all day long.*

Nàng từ ân oán rạch ròi,  
 Bể oan đường đã vơi vơi cạnh lòng.  
 Tạ ân lạy trước Từ công:  
 "Chút thân bồ liễu nào mong có rày!  
 "Trộm nhờ sấm sét ra tay,  
 "Tắc riêng như cất gánh đầy đổ đi!  
 "Chạm xương chếp dạ xiết chi,  
 "Để đem gan cóc đèn nghì trời mây!"  
 Từ rằng: "Quốc sĩ xưa nay,  
 "Chọn người tri kỷ một ngày được chẳng?  
 "Anh hùng tiếng đã gọi rằng,  
 "Giữa đường dầu thấy bất bằng mà tha!  
 "Huống chi việc cũng việc nhà.  
 "Lọ là thâm tạ mới là tri ân.  
 "Xót nàng còn chút song thân,  
 "Bấy nay kẻ Việt người Tần cớ gì xa.  
 "Sao cho muôn dặm một nhà.  
 "Cho người thấy mặt là ta cam lòng".

*Besides, when any wrong  
is done along the path I tread  
can I avert my head  
to leave injustice unobserved,  
then claim to have deserved  
the hero's name they give to me?  
Why thank me fervently  
for doing what I had to do?  
And now I pity you  
because so long you've had to stay  
near Guangzhou, far away  
from your old parents in Shanxi;  
and therefore I shall be  
from now on twice as diligent  
and shall not rest content  
until you meet with them again!*

*He gave the order then  
a sumptuous banquet to prepare  
for all the soldiers there,  
as though it was his one design  
to wash away with wine  
the sad misfortunes of his queen.*



*Vội truyền sửa tiệc quân trung,  
Muốn binh nghìn tướng hội đồng tấỵ oan.*

*Just as if he had been  
splitting bamboo or breaking slates  
Tu-Hai defeated states  
in which his name was feared and famed.  
He very soon proclaimed  
himself to be an emperor,  
and as the conqueror  
he organised a government,  
in order to augment  
his martial power with civil strength.  
Thus all the breadth and length  
of China's southern half he held  
And now five times he quelled  
revolts, five towns he disciplined  
as easily as wind  
sweeps showers of rain from off the land.  
Well sharpened by the sand  
of war, his sword soon ran through his  
poor petty enemies  
like dummies made from bags of flour.  
At last there came an hour  
when all the frontier zones were his,  
within which territories  
there was no lack of powerful lords;  
and yet before his swords  
who dared resist his sovereignty?  
Next the entirety  
of China's seaboard he subdued.*

Thừa cơ trúc chẻ ngói tan,  
Binh uy từ ấy sấm ran trong ngoài.  
Triều đình riêng một góc trời,  
Gồm hai văn võ rạch đôi sơn hà.  
Đòi cơn gió quét mưa sa,  
Huyện thành đập đổ năm tòa cõi nam.  
Phong trần mãi một lối gươm,  
Những loài giá áo túi cơm sá gì!  
Nghênh ngang một cõi biên thùi,  
Kém gì cô quả kém gì bá vương!  
Trước cờ ai dám tranh cường,  
Năm năm hùng cứ một phương hải tào.

*But then there came a shrewd  
provincial ruler, Ho-Ton-Hien,  
distinguished among men,  
for statesmanship, a messenger  
of Beijing's emperor,  
and had His Royal Highness not  
propelled Ho's chariot  
with a symbolic push, just so  
that everyone might know  
he went as envoy of the throne?  
Moreover, he was shown,  
as chief commander in the field,  
to have the power to wield  
with which he could defeat his foe.  
He knew already, though,  
that Tu-Hai was a valiant man  
and also, that each plan  
he made was first discussed with Kieu.  
Pretending then to sue  
for peace, Ho camped his troops nearby.  
He offered to Tu Hai,  
a gift by special envoy's hand  
composed of jade, fold, and  
of silks, to tempt him to submit,  
and also sent with it  
a special gift as well for Kieu;  
two serving maids, and, too,  
a thousand pounds of gold and jade*

*Có quan tống đốc trọng thần.  
Là Hồ Tôn Hiến kinh luân gồm tài.  
Đẩy xe vàng chỉ đặc sai,  
Tiện nghi bất tiểu việc ngoài đồng ruộng.  
Biết Từ là đáng anh hùng.  
Biết nàng cũng dự quân trung luận bàn.  
Đóng quân làm chức chiêu an,  
Ngọc vàng gấm vóc, sai quan thuyết hàng.  
Lại riêng một lễ với nàng,  
Hai tên thể nữ ngọc vàng nghìn cân.*

*The message was relayed  
to Tu-Hai who was sceptical;  
"I am the prince of all  
the seas of Chu and streams of Wu  
through what my arm can do;  
I built my heritage alone,  
If I resign my throne  
as vassal to the Emperor,  
what is the future for  
defeated rebels at the court,  
where everyone is caught  
up in each other's flowing skirt?  
What? Crawling in the dirt  
and backing out with head bowed fow?  
A part it such a show  
is no exchange for my domains!  
Not all their joint campaigns  
shall wrest this country from my hand,  
for here, the sky and land  
are mine, for me freely to use  
exactly as I choose,  
and no one can dictate to me."*

Tin vào gửi trước trung quân,  
Từ công riêng hãy mười phân hồ đồ,  
Một tay gây dựng cơ đồ  
Bấy lâu bể Sở sông Ngô tung hoành!  
Bỏ thân về với triều đình,  
Hàng thần lơ láo phận mình ra đầu?  
Áo xiêm ràng buộc lấy nhau,  
Vào luồn ra cúi công hầu mà chi?  
Sao bằng riêng một biên thù,  
Sức này đã dễ làm gì được nhau?  
Chọc trời quấy nước mặc dầu,  
Dọc ngang nào biết trên đầu có ai?

*But Kieu confidently  
believed in everyone she met,  
and once again she let  
herself be swayed by gifts of gold  
and all that she was told  
by envoys from the royal court.  
"And after all", she thought,  
"I'm only just a floating flower,  
and till the present hour  
each day has had mishap in it,  
but should Tu-Hai submit  
to be a vassal, I'd be free  
to travel fearlessly  
and ride the middle of the road.  
Blessings would be bestowed  
upon the nation and on us,  
and later, I should thus  
be able to go home again;  
as wife of Tu-Hai then  
I would be worthy of respect;  
what honour would reflect  
on me, and on my parents too!  
I only want to do  
my best for state and family, till  
at last I can fulfil  
my two main duties morally:  
my filial piety  
and duty to my emperor.*



Nàng thì thật dạ tin người,  
Lễ nhiều nói ngọt, nghe lời dễ xiêu.  
Nghĩ mình mặt nước cánh bèo,  
Đã nhiều lưu lạc lại nhiều gian truân.  
Bằng nay chịu tiếng vương thần,  
Thênh thênh đường cái thanh vân hẹp gì!  
Công tư vẹn cả hai bề,  
Dần dà rồi sẽ liệu về cố hương.  
Cũng ngôi mệnh phụ đường đường,  
Nở nang mày mặt rõ ràng mẹ cha.  
Trên vì nước dưới vì nhà,  
Một là đặc hiếu hai là đặc trung.  
Chẳng hơn chiếc bách giữa dòng,  
E dè sóng vỗ hãi hùng nước sa.

*Is such a course not more  
worth while than drifting like a boat  
that tries to keep afloat  
in swirling currents, frightened stiff  
of every little whiff  
of wind or shock of any wave?*

So, when the moment gave  
 an opening, she voiced her thought  
 while Tu-Hai and his court  
 debated whether they should yield:  
 "Like rain upon a field,  
 the Emperor's most kindly grace  
 has showered the populace  
 and soaked into their grateful hearts,  
 and using all the arts  
 he knew, a lasting peace he sought.  
 But think: Since we have fought  
 this war, the unknown soldiers' bones  
 lie stacked around your thrones  
 in piles heaped higher than your head;  
 why leave, when you are dead,  
 a bitter aftertaste behind?  
 Who'll praise you if they find  
 you are a bandit like Huang-Chao?  
 What are more worthy now  
 than well-paid dull official posts?  
 Are soldiers' empty boasts?  
 For many, seeking fame, have erred."  
 At this persuasive word  
 Tu-Hai abandoned warlike thought,  
 and, once decided, sought  
 to sign surrender terms straightway.  
 He settled on a day  
 to meet the envoy formally;  
 they fixed a date to be  
 the day they would disarm their men;  
 as for their armies, then  
 they promised to disband them both.

Nhân khi bàn bạc gần xa,  
Thừa cơ, nàng mới bàn ra nói vào.  
Rằng: "Trong Thánh trạch dồi dào,  
"Tươi ra đã khắp thấm vào đã sâu.  
"Bình thành công đức bấy lâu,  
"Ai ai cũng đợi trên đầu biết bao.  
"Ngấm từ đây việc binh đao,  
"Đóng xương Vô-định đã cao bằng đầu.  
"Làm chi để tiếng về sau,  
"Nghìn năm ai có khen đầu Hoàng Sào!  
"Sao bằng lộc trọng quyền cao,  
"Công danh ai dứt lối nào cho qua?"  
Nghe lời nàng nói mặn mà,  
Thế công, Từ mới trở ra thế hàng.  
Chỉnh nghi tiếp sứ vội vàng,  
Hẹn kỳ thúc giáp quyết đường giải binh.

So, trusting in the oath  
of peace exchanged below the wall  
the troops neglected all  
the banners and relaxed their guard;  
the drums within the yard  
were later than they should have been;  
there was no discipline  
or supervision anywhere.  
But all that happened there  
was told to the imperial band,  
and General Ho, who planned  
a trick, now knew his time had come.  
He hid in ambush some  
battalions to await his sign;  
Tu-Hai observed a line  
of troops, the flag of truce he saw,  
they carried gifts before  
but guns of bronze were hid behind.  
By innocence made blind  
to such deceit, he went to wait  
outside the city gate.  
in full dress, to surrender then.  
At once, Ho gave his men  
the secret signal to attack.  
The cannons answered back  
with roars upon the higher ground;  
flags shot up all around.

Tin lời thành hạ yêu minh,  
Ngon cờ ngơ ngác trông canh trể trăng.  
Việc binh bỏ chẳng giữ giàng,  
Vương sư dòm đã tỏ tường thực hư.  
Hồ công quyết kế thừa cơ,  
Lễ tiên binh hậu khắc cờ tập công.  
Kéo cờ chiêu phủ tiên phong,  
Lễ nghi dàn trước bác đồng phục sau.  
Từ công hờ hững biết đâu?  
Đại quan lễ phục ra đầu cửa viên.  
Hồ công ám hiệu trận tiền,  
Ba bề phát súng bốn bên kéo cờ.

*The fiercest tiger, if one snares  
him, taken unawares,  
is tamed and helpless in a cage;  
but Tu-Hai wished to wage  
his warfare like a warrior true,  
and where the battle grew  
most fierce, he boldly faced his foes;  
till, when his spirit rose  
to heaven to dwell among the great,  
his body still stood straight,  
as though his feet had roots concealed  
beneath the battlefield;  
as steady as a block of stone  
and standing all alone,  
immobile as a monument.  
Some knocked him as they went  
but still he stood unmoved and still.  
All resolute to kill  
their foes until the final man,  
the Emperor's forces ran  
in hot pursuit both far and nigh;  
the stench of death rose high  
within and round the moat and wall.  
Though stones and arrows fall  
like hail all round, led by a few  
assembled soldiers, Kieu  
would find her husband if she could.  
She saw him where he stood  
a silhouette against the sky;  
then she began to cry.*

Đang khi bất ý chẳng ngờ,  
Hùm thiêng khi đã sa cơ cũng hèn!  
Từ sinh liêu giữa trận tiền,  
Dạn dày cho biết gan liền tướng quân!  
Khí thiêng khi đã về thần,  
Nhon nhon còn đứng chôn chân giữa vòng!  
Trơ như đá vững như đồng,  
Ai lay chẳng chuyển ai rung chẳng dời.  
Quan quân truy sát đuổi dài,  
Ừ ừ sát khí ngất trời ai đang!  
Trong hào ngoài lũy tan hoang,  
Loạn quân vừa dất tay nài đến nơi.  
Trong vòng tên đá bồi bồi,  
Thấy Từ còn đứng giữa trời trơ trơ.



*You came to this, though wise and brave,  
by the advice I gave;  
how dare I look at you, Tu-Hai?  
Far better I should die  
upon this same sad day as you!"*  
*Tears flowed and sorrow grew;  
before her lord she bowed down low.  
As though Fate's cruelest blow  
could not divide them, straight away,  
beside her as she lay  
the corpse that had been Tu-Hai fell.*  
*This could not but compel  
compassion in the passers-by;  
some soldiers, drawing nigh  
gently led Kieu away from there  
to the headquarters, where  
Ho-Ton-Hien pitied her straight way;*  
*Poor helpless girl! Today,  
a victim of the battle zone,  
you bear your grief alone,  
deserving all our sympathy.*  
*We owe our victory  
to wise plans from our Emperor,  
but were it not for your  
involvement, we would not have won.*  
*Because of what you've done,  
choose now, what shall be done with you?*

Khóc rằng: "Trí dũng có thừa,  
"Bởi nghe lời thiếp nên cớ hội này!  
"Một nào trông thấy nhau đây?  
"Thà liều sống thác một ngày với nhau!"  
Dòng thu như giọt cơn sầu,  
Dứt lời, nàng cũng gieo dầu một bèn.  
Lạ thay oan khí tương triền!  
Nàng vừa phục xuống Từ liền ngã ra.  
Quan quân kẻ lại người qua,  
Xót nàng sẽ lại vực ra dần dần.  
Đem vào đến trước trung quán,  
Hồ công thấy mặt ân cần hỏi han.  
Rằng: "Nàng chút phận hồng nhan,  
"Gặp cơn binh cách nhiều nàn cũng thương!  
"Đã hay thành toán miếu đường,  
"Giúp công cũng có lời nàng mới nên.  
"Bây giờ sự đã vẹn tuyền,  
"Mặc lòng nghĩ lấy muốn xin bề nào?"

*Kieu's tears flowed down anew;  
 she paused, and then poured out her mind;  
 Tu-Hai was brave and kind;  
 he won a realm wide as the sea;  
     why did he trust in me  
 and heed me more than anyone?  
 A hundred battles won,  
 he wished to serve the Emperor  
     in hope of gaining for  
 his vassalage the royal grace,<sup>1</sup>  
     and for his wife, a place  
     of dignity within the court.  
 Who ever would have thought  
 he would be slain so brutally?  
 For five years he was free;  
 to no one would he ever yield,  
     and on the battlefield  
 disdainfully he risked his life.  
 Would you console his wife  
 with praise for unwise words I said?  
 I wish — that I were dead!  
 The more you speak, the more I grieve,  
     for truly, I believe  
 myself more guilty than deserving praise.  
 And so that I may raise  
 a modest tomb, I only crave  
 the ground to dig a grave  
 for him I love alive or dead!  
 On hearing what she said,  
 Ho-Ton-Hien pitied all her pains  
 and had Tu-Hai's remains  
 interred close by the riverside.*

Nàng càng giọt ngọc tuôn dào,  
Ngập ngừng mới gởi thấp cao sự lòng.  
Rằng: "Từ là đấng anh hùng,  
"Dọc ngang trời rộng vẫy vùng bể khơi!  
"Tin tôi nên quá nghe lời.  
"Đem thân bách chiến làm tôi triều đình,  
"Ngõ là phu quý phụ vinh,  
"Ai ngờ một phút tan tành thịt xương!  
"Năm năm trời bể ngang tàng,  
"Dấn mình đi bỏ chiến trường như không.  
"Khéo khuyên kẻ lấy làm công,  
"Kẻ bao nhiêu lại đau lòng bấy nhiêu!  
"Xét mình công ít tội nhiều,  
"Sống thừa, tôi đã nên liều mình tôi!  
"Xin cho tiện thổ một doi,  
"Gọi là đắp điểm lấy người tử sinh!"  
Hồ công nghe nói thương tình,  
Truyền cho cỏ táng di hình bên sông.

*They hastened to provide  
a feast to mark their victory,  
with sounds of minstrelsy,  
and all ranks mixed without taboo,  
Ho-Ton-Hien called for Kieu  
to serve within his tent: the brute  
then made her take her lute  
and play her famous melodies.  
She brought forth harmonies  
like dirges moaned in wind and rain,  
as though, in mortal pain  
her fingers bled upon the strings;  
no cicada that sings,  
nor gibbon's cry could be so sad;  
Ho-Ton-Hien's face now had  
a pained expression: teardrops proved  
how deeply he was moved;  
he asked, "What is this melody?  
In it, it seems to me  
a thousand sorrows congregate!  
It's name is "Cruel Fate".  
Kieu said, "On this same instrument  
when young and innocent.  
I often played this melody.  
I chose it then to be  
my favourite so long ago.  
I seem to undergo  
the cruel fate it speaks of now!*

Trong quán mở tiệc hạ công.  
Xôn xao tở trúc hội đồng quân quan.  
Bắt nàng thị yến dưới màn,  
Dở say lại ép cung đàn nhật tâu.  
Một cung gió thấm mưa sầu,  
Bốn dây nhỏ máu năm đầu ngón tay!  
Ve ngâm vườn hót nào tày,  
Lọt tai, Hồ cũng nhả mảy rơi châu.  
Hỏi rằng: "Này khúc ở đâu?  
"Nghe ra muôn oán nghìn sầu lắm thay!"  
Thưa rằng: "Bạc mệnh khúc này, -  
"Phổ vào đàn ấy những ngày còn thơ.  
"Cung cầm lựa những ngày xưa,  
"Mà gương bạc mệnh bây giờ là đây!"  
Nghe càng đắm ngất càng say,  
Lạ cho mặt sắt cũng ngây vì tình!  
Dạy rằng: "Hương lửa ba sinh,  
"Dây loan xin nối cầm lành cho ơi"

*The more he heard of how  
she played the more entranced he grew  
the more entranced by Kieu,  
the more in love he seemed to feel.  
Strange, that this face of steel  
could be bewitched and overawed!  
"This must be the reward  
for some good deed three lives ago"  
he said at last, "and so  
mend me your lute with phoenix glue!"  
"But what am I?" asked Kieu  
"A fallen girl because of whom;  
a brave man met his doom;  
a flower whose tint will soon depart.  
The silk threads of my heart  
are snapped like "Widow Ziao-Lian's lute".  
Yet I am destitute,  
and if with you I were to live  
as wife, then you could give  
me one more thing, a chance that I  
once more before I die  
might see my birthplace once again."*

*Thưa rằng: "Chút phận lạc loài,  
"Trong mình nghĩ đã có người thác oan.  
"Còn chi nữa cánh hoa tàn,  
"Tơ lòng đã đứt dây đàn Tiểu Lân.  
"Rộng thương còn mảnh hồng quần,  
"Hơi tàn được thấy gốc phần là may!"*



*It seems that Ho-ton-Hien  
had drunk too deeply at the feast  
and not until the east  
was red with dawn did he recall  
the detailed tale of all  
that happened in that night of love.*

*"Those who are set above  
me watch my every act", he mused  
the people too are used  
to judge officials by their deeds.*

*I'm not a man who needs  
to spend my life philandering -  
how can I bring this thing  
to a conclusion that's discrete?"*

*So when he took his seat  
to start the business the day,  
he settled on a way  
to solve the problem out of hand.*

*When mandarins command  
who dares protest at what they do?*

*Without consulting Kieu  
he told his men without delay  
to give the girl away  
to wed a local mandarin.*

*O fickle Fate, within  
whose power our destinies all lie,  
how could you ever tie  
the marriage knot at random so?*

Hạ công chén đã quá say,  
Hồ công đến lúc rạng ngày nhớ ra.  
Nghĩ mình phương diện quốc gia,  
Quan trên nhắm xuống người ta trông vào.  
Phải tuồng trăng gió hay sao?  
Sự này biết tính thế nào được đây?  
Công nha vừa buổi sáng ngày,  
Quyết tình, Hồ mới đoán ngay một bài.  
Lệnh quan, ai dám cãi lời,  
Ép tình mới gán cho người thổ quan.  
Ông tơ thực nhé đa đoan!  
Xe tơ sao khéo vợ quàng vợ xiên?

*That night, Kieu had to go  
in bridal palanquin aboard  
a junk which had been moored  
upon the river near the town.  
Although the blinds were down  
a bright lamp lit the cabin space.  
Alone, Kieu's lovely face  
grew steadily more ill at ease  
like drooping willow trees  
or fading flowers of peach or plum.  
She could not find a crumb  
of comfort in her present plight.  
"Wild waves will drown me quite,  
and then the sand the shore  
will bury me once more",  
she murmured sadly as she sobbed;  
"now am I being robbed  
of all my parents did for me.  
and I shall ever be  
denied all happiness and grace.  
Where shall I find a place  
to lay my bones when I shall die,  
beneath this foreign sky,  
upon this ocean's vast expanse?  
Oh cruel unlycky chance!  
Who broke the threads of fortune so  
that I again must go,  
a bride, to give myself away?*

Kiếp hoa áp thẳng xuống thuyền,  
Lá màn rủ thấp ngọn đèn khêu cao.  
Nàng càng ủ liễu phai đào,  
Trăm phần nào có phần nào phần tươi?  
Đành thân cát lấp sóng vùi,  
Cướp công cha mẹ thiệt đời thông minh!  
Chân trời mặt bể lênh dênh.  
Năm xương biết gửi tử sinh chốn nào?  
Duyên đầu, ai dứt tơ đào,  
Nợ đầu, ai đã dặt vào tận tay!  
Thân sao thân đến thế này?  
Còn ngày nào cũng dư ngày ấy thôi!  
Đã không biết sống là vui,  
Tắm thân nào biết thiệt thòi là thương!  
Một mình cay đắng trăm đường,  
Thôi thì nát ngọc tan vàng thì thôi!  
Mảnh trăng đã gác non doài,  
Một mình lóang nhùnh đứng ngời chưa xong,

*To live but one more day  
is one too many days to live.  
Since living then can give  
me no more joy, why should I stay  
and weep, since every day  
can only bring me further pain?  
Must I completely drain  
this bitter cup till all is gone?  
No, I will not go on!  
The time has come now to destroy  
this jade and golden toy  
I call my body - now, at last!"*  
The moon was setting fast  
behind the Western Mountains; Kieu  
uncertain what to do  
rose, agitated, to her feet,  
and then resumed her seat  
alone within the cabin there.  
Now suddenly the air  
re-echoed with a roaring sound  
of waves that washed around  
the gunwale like a rising tide.  
Kieu put her head outside  
and asked a boatman what it was.  
He said it was because  
their junk had entered the Qian-Tang.  
The recollection sprang  
to Kieu's mind at the boatman's word

*Triều dẫu nổi tiếng dùng dùng,  
Hỏi ra mới biết rằng sông Tiền Đường.  
Nhớ lời thần mộng rõ ràng,  
Này thôi hết kiếp đoạn trường là đây!  
"Đạm Tiên nàng nhé có hay!  
Hẹn ta thì đợi dưới này rước ta".*

*of how she once had heard  
that river mentioned in a dream.  
"Then in this very stream",  
she thought, "must end my sad career  
O Dam-Tien do you hear?  
This is the place you said we'd meet;  
be ready then to greet  
me underneath this stream today!"*

*A sheet of paper lay  
within the oil lamp's pool of light,  
almost as though it might  
have been particularly meant  
for Kieu's last sad lament;  
she wrote her epitaph thereon –  
there where the lamplight shone  
with yellow so warm and bright –  
then stepped into the night  
where sky and river merged in blue.  
"How kind he was, poor Tu!  
My wrong advice was surely how  
he met his death, and now  
I'm going to wed another man".  
Kieu told herself, "How can  
I live with such a loss of face?  
This is the time and place  
for earthly flesh and soul to part.  
Alas, my broken heart,  
I now commit you to the dark!  
Upon the floating bark  
she stood and watched the boundless deep;  
at last she made her leap  
into the swiftly flowing wave.*



Dưới đèn sẵn bức tiên hoa,  
Một thiên tuyệt bút gọi là để sau.  
Cửa bỗng vội mở rèm châu,  
Trời cao sóng rộng một màu bao la.  
Rằng: "Từ công hậu đãi ta,  
"Chút vì vệt nước mà ra phụ lòng.  
"Giết chồng mà lại lấy chồng,  
"Mặt nào còn đứng ở trong cõi đời?  
"Thôi thì một thác cho rồi,  
Tắm lòng phó mặc trên trời dưới sông!"  
Trông vời con nước mệnh mông,  
Đem mình gieo xuống giữa dòng trường giang.

*Hoping that he could save  
his bride, the local manddarin  
flung himself quickly in  
behind her, but he was too late  
beneath the waters' spate  
her precious body sank like stone.  
What sad trials she had known!  
Human she was as you or I;  
so tell me therefore why  
when talented and fair of face,  
the Fates should wish to place  
such vile misfortune in her way?  
If she had had to stay  
and work out to the bitter end  
whatever Fate might send  
where would her springtime grace have gone?  
While fifteen years dragged on  
how often had she set her sex  
examples by the checks  
she kept upon her charity!  
No human destiny  
could be more cruel than hers had been  
and she had never seen  
that bliss which often follows ill;  
for Heaven always will  
at length, have pity on the just  
whose sacrifices must  
be compensated for at last.*

Thổ quan theo vớt vôi vàng,  
Thì đà đắm ngọc chìm hương mất rồi!  
Thương thay cũng một kiếp người,  
Hại thay, mang lấy sắc tài làm chi!  
Những là oan khổ lưu ly,  
Chờ cho hết kiếp còn gì là thân!  
Mười lăm năm bấy nhiêu lần,  
Làm gương cho khách hồng quần thử soi!  
Đời người đến thế thì thôi!  
Trong cơ âm cực dương hồi khôn hay,  
Mấy người hiểu nghĩa xưa nay,  
Trời làm chi đến lâu ngày càng thương!

\*

*Abbess Giac Duyen had passed  
upon her way on leaving Kieu,  
bearing, as pilgrims do  
only a yoke, from either end  
of which she could suspend  
a small box and a water-skin.*

*One day, arriving in  
the home town of Tam-Hop the wise,  
she took time to apprise  
her of the story of her friend;  
Why then does Heaven send  
so much distress on Kieu although  
so dutiful and so  
observant in religion, say?*

*When questioned in this way  
the nun replied, "Our weal and woe  
are sent by Heaven, I know,  
but on the basis of our deeds.*

*To live in bliss, one needs  
renunciation of desire.*

*Hot passion is a fire  
which only leads to sufferings.*

*Thuy-Kieu is wise, but things  
have worked out wrong for her, for she  
has had, as you can see,  
the bad luck to be beautiful,  
and so is vulnerable  
to the affliction known as love.*

Giác Duyên từ tiết già nàng,  
Đeo bầu quấy níp rộng đường vân du,  
Gặp bà Tam Hợp đạo cô,  
Thong dong hỏi hết nhỏ to sự nùng:  
"Nàng sao hiểu nghĩa đủ đường,  
"Kiếp sao rặt những đoạn trường thế thời?"  
Sư rằng: "Phúc họa đạo trời,  
"Cõi nguồn cũng ở lòng người mà ra.  
"Có trời mà cũng tại ta,  
Tu là cõi phúc tình là dây oan.  
"Thúy Kiều sắc sảo khôn ngoan,  
"Vô duyên là phận hồng nhan đã đành,  
"Lại mang lấy một chữ tình,  
"Khuê khuê mình buộc lấy mình vào trong.  
Vậy nên những chốn thong dong,  
"Ở không yên ổn ngồi không vững vàng.  
"Ma đưa lối quỷ đem đường,  
"Lại tìm những chốn đoạn trường mà đi,

*All other sins above  
she obstinately clings to it.  
Therefore, when she has lit  
upon a shelter, she can find  
therein no peace of mind  
there is no place she wants to stay;  
some demon in her way  
soon drives her to new misery.  
From one misfortune free,  
a worse soon has her in its snare.  
Twice she has had to bear  
a slave's blue dress and chapped red face.  
Twice she has born disgrace  
in red-light districts' trade, I see.  
And later, she will be  
surrounded by armed halberdiers,  
with naked swords and spears  
living with bandits hid away  
with servants, till one day  
Thuy-Kieu when left alone at last  
will dive into a fast  
and rising current's foamy brim  
like fish that gladly swim  
into a dragon's gaping jaws.  
This fate has as its cause  
her passion she alone can know  
what she must undergo  
her exile and her martyrdom.  
There's no escaping from  
her grief until this life she quits.*

"Hết nạn ấy đến nạn kia,  
"Thanh lâu hai lượt thanh y hai lần.  
"Trong vòng giáo dục gươm trần,  
"Kẻ rãng hùm sói gởi thân tôi đòi.  
"Giữa dòng nước chảy sóng dồi,  
"Trước hàm rồng cá, gieo mồi vắng tanh.  
"Oan kia theo mãi với tình,  
"Một mình mình biết một mình mình hay.  
"Làm cho sóng đọa thác đầy,  
"Đoạn trường cho hết kiếp này mới thôi!"

*Frightened out of her wits  
by this prediction, Giac Duyen cried  
"Not until she has died!  
What will remain of poor Kieu then?  
Ah, but the momen when  
she seems to drown is not the end,"  
the nun said to her friend.  
"Merits and sins are weighed and then  
are often weighed again.  
Balance them out in Kieu's case now  
though trapped by love, somehow  
never seduced by luxury,  
her deep love willingly  
she sacrificed that she might pay  
her parents in some way  
a deeper debt of gratitude.  
This filial attitude  
stirred Heaven itself to pity when  
selling her boddy then,  
she kept her father still alive.  
At all times she would strive,  
punishing here, forgiving there  
both to distinguish where  
the right and wrong in actions dwell,  
and to discern as well,  
important things from trivial.  
Such peerless virtue shall  
outweigh the years she has misspent;*



Giác Duyên nghe nói rưng rờ:  
"Một đời nàng nhẽ, thương ôi còn gì!"  
Sư rằng: "Song chẳng hề chi,  
"Nghiep duyên cân lại nhắc đi còn nhiều.  
"Xét trong tội nghiệp Thúy Kiều,  
"Mắc điều tình ái khỏi điều tà dâm.  
"Lấy tình thâm tra nghĩa thâm,  
"Bán mình đã động hiếu tâm đền trời!"  
"Hại một người cứu muôn người,  
"Biết đường khinh trọng biết lời phải chăng.  
"Thừa công đức ấy ai bằng?  
"Túc khiến đã rửa láng láng sạch rồi'  
"Khi nên trời cũng chiều người,  
"Nhẹ nhàng nợ trước đền bồi duyên sau.  
"Giác Duyên dù nhớ nghĩa nhau,  
"Tiền Đường thả một bè lau rước người.  
"Trước sau cho vẹn một lời,  
"Duyên ta mà cũng phúc trời chi không!"

*Heaven can be lenient  
when debts are paid rewards remain.  
Giac-Duyen if you retain  
some love for that poor woman go  
to Qian-Tang Rive, so  
that you may float a raft of reeds  
to pull her from the weeds  
which edge it. Please do as I say;  
is it not Heaven's way  
to grant some joy in one's fate?"*

*The Abbess could not wait,  
leaping with joy she left the nun  
and hastened at a run  
to find a home by Qian-Tang's flood.  
With gathered thatch and mud  
she built herself a tiny cell  
in which she planned to dwell  
and share her watch with cloud and wave.*

*A daily wage she gave  
to two strong fishermen, that they  
might moor their boats each day  
at either bank, with nets between.*

*Brave, constant and serene  
the holy woman sat to wait.*

*If it should be that Fate  
had destined them to meet again  
as was foretold, why then  
a miracle that chance would be.*

*Giác Duyên nghe nói mừng lòng,  
Lân la tìm thú bên sông Tiền Đường.  
Đánh tranh chum nóc thảo đường,  
Một gian nước biếc mây vàng chia đôi.  
Thuê năm ngư phủ hai người,  
Đóng thuyền chực bến kết chài giăng sông.  
Một lòng chẳng quản mấy công,  
Khéo thay gặp gỡ cũng trong chuyển vần!*

*When Kieu despairingly  
plunged in the river' silver gleam,  
she drifted down the stream  
to where the fishers' nets were stretched.  
That morning, when they fetched  
them in, they pulled the drowning Kieu  
unconscious into view –  
Tam-Hop's predictions were not wrong!  
They laid her, stretched along  
the decking in her clinging dress.  
Her face's loveliness,  
though she was soaked with water, shone  
undimmed; Giac-Duyen looked on  
and recognised her straight away.  
Meanwhile, poor Kieu still lay  
immersed in dreams of paradise,  
when, right before her eyes  
Dam-Tien appeared, just as before.  
"I have been waiting more  
than ten years by this stream for you".  
the vision said, "Oh Kieu,  
for such a girl how cruel your fate!  
Though in some former state  
some wrong you did may be the cause,  
a loving heart like yours  
is rare indeed in human folk.  
Your faith like incense smoke  
has risen up to heaven above.*

Kiều từ gieo xuống duềnh ngân,  
Nước xuôi bỗng đã trôi dần tận nơi.  
Ngư ông kéo lưới vớt người,  
Ngắm lời Tam Hợp rõ mười chẳng ngoa!  
Trên mũi lướt mướt áo là,  
Tuy đầm hơi nước chưa lòa bóng gương.  
Giác Duyên nhận thật mặt nàng,  
Nàng còn thêm thiếp giác vàng chưa phai.  
Mơ màng phách quế hồn mai,  
Đạm Tiên, thoát đã thấy người ngày xưa.  
Rằng: "Tôi đã có lòng chờ,  
"Mất công mười mấy năm thừa ở đây.  
"Chị sao phận mỏng phúc dày,  
"Kiếp xưa đã vậy lòng này để ai!  
"Tám thành đã thấu đến trời.  
"Bán mình là hiếu cứu người là nhân.  
"Một niềm vì nước vì dân,  
"Âm công cái một đồng cân đã già!

*For this was filial love;  
to save your father, you were sold;  
and later, pure as gold  
in altruism served a friend.  
Then daily without end  
you served your country faithfully.  
Your merits steadily  
increased, until at last they weigh  
an ounce or two today  
more than your previous deeds of shame.  
Heaven has struck off your name  
from those cursed with a broken heart.  
So, before I depart,  
I shall return your mournful lays;  
for many happy days  
remain for you, my sister dear.  
and many a joyful year  
your virtuous deeds have earned for you."*

"Đoạn trường số rút tên ra,  
"Đoạn trường thơ phải đưa mà trả nhau.  
"Còn nhiều hưởng thụ về lâu,  
"Duyên xưa tròn trặn phúc sau dồi dào!"



*Then suddenly poor Kieu  
heard someone's voice, while still confused.  
call her the name she used  
as a religious, "Crystal Spring"!*

*At once awakening,  
Kieu wondered whether still she dreamed;  
for sleep and waking seemed  
equally puzzling, seeing then  
Giac-Duyen, and not Dam-Tien,  
sitting beside her in the boat.*

*A lump came to her throat  
and both were glad to meet again.*

*The nun paid off the men  
who watched the stream so long and well,  
then took Thuy-Kieu to dwell  
winthin her simple chapel there.*

*From then on, that was where  
they lived, and shared the pleasures of  
a common roof above  
the fresh winds in the moonlit nights,  
and all the pure delights  
of simple vegetarian fare.*

*In contemplating there  
the evening tides, far from the crowds,  
the morning sky and clouds,  
long days and seasons they could spend.*

*Kieu's ills were at an end  
and troubles gone, but when would she  
her former true love see?*

*How could he find her in this place?*

Nàng còn ngỡ ngẩn biết sao,  
Trạc Tuyền! nghe tiếng gọi vào bên tai.  
Giật mình thoát tỉnh giấc mai,  
Bóng khuôn nào đã biết ai mà nhìn.  
Trong thuyền nào thấy Đạm Tiên,  
Bên mình chỉ thấy Giác Duyên ngồi kề.  
Thấy nhau mừng rỡ trăm bề,  
Dọn thuyền mới rước nàng về thảo lư.  
Một nhà chung chạ sớm trưa.  
Gió, trăng mát mặt, muối dưa chay lòng.  
Bốn bề bát ngát mệnh mông,  
Triều dâng hôm sớm mây hồng trước sau.  
Nạn xưa trút sạch lâu lâu,  
Duyên xưa chưa dễ biết dấu chốn này.

\*

*When Kieu's pain and disgrace  
were at their zenith, young Kim-Trong.  
Who had been for so long  
cruelly divided from his love,  
was as deserving of  
our pity and our sympathies.  
His uncle's obsequies  
completed, when six months had passed,  
Kim journeyed home as fast  
as he could go, and straight away  
he sought, that very day,  
Kieu's garden, as they had arranged.  
But everything was changed;  
the garden was all overgrown  
with reeds; no face was shown  
at the small window where his love  
had watched the moon above;  
no one was there to hear his calls.  
The plaster on the walls  
was all washed off with winter rain;  
but blossom once again  
smiled on the peach-tree in the breeze.  
Some swallows flew with ease  
into the bare, deserted hall;  
the grass had covered all  
the ground, and moid the footprints there,  
and at the corner where  
he used to meet his love before,  
the footpath was no more,  
and brambles overgrew the wall.  
Silence reigned over all,  
Whom could he ask, in whom confide?*

Nỗi nàng tai nạn đã đầy,  
Nỗi chàng Kim Trọng bấy chầy mới thương.  
Từ ngày muốn dặm phù tang,  
Nửa năm ở đất Liêu Dương lại nhà.  
Vội sang vườn Thúy dò la,  
Nhìn xem phong cảnh nay đã khác xưa.  
Đầy vườn cỏ mọc lau thưa,  
Song trăng quạnh quẽ vách mưa rã rời.  
Trước sau nào thấy bóng người,  
Hoa đào năm ngoái còn cười gió đông.  
Xập xè én liệng lâu không,  
Cỏ lan mặt đất rêu phong dấu giày.  
Cuối tường gai góc mọc đầy,  
Đi về này những lối này năm xưa.  
Chung quanh lạnh ngắt như tờ,  
Nỗi niềm tâm sự bấy giờ hỏi ai?

*Then suddenly he spied  
a neighbour of the Vuongs approach.  
Kim gently tried to broach  
the question of the empty hall;  
"Where's Vuong? "Oh, he was falsely sued".  
"And Kieu? With rectitude  
the poor girl sold herself to save  
her father from his grave".  
"The family? Ah, they have gone  
to far off lands", "And on  
arrival?" Mrs. Vuong, Vuong-Quan.  
Kieu's sister too, Thuy-Van.  
were so poor that they had to strive  
to keep themselves alive  
by needlework and copying books"  
Kim-Trong's whole body shook;  
the news, like thunder, froze him cold.  
As soon as all was told  
he asked where they had gone to stay,  
and went there straight away.*

Láng giềng có kẻ sang chơi,  
Lân la sẽ hỏi một hai sự tình.  
Hỏi ông, ông mắc tụng đình,  
Hỏi nàng, nàng đã bán mình chuộc cha.  
Hỏi nhà, nhà đã dời xa,  
Hỏi chàng Vương với cùng là Thúy Vân.  
Đều là sa sút khó khăn,  
May thuê viết mượn kiếm ăn lần hồi.  
Điều đâu sét đánh lưng trời,  
Thoắt nghe, chàng thoắt rụng rời xiết bao!  
Vội han di trú nơi nao,  
Đánh đường, chàng mới tìm vào tận nơi.

*He found a hut with mud-daubed wall;  
a bamboo fence ran all  
around it, thus enclosing there  
a little garden, where  
the unkempt grass was wet with rain.  
How to describe the pain  
with which Kim-Trong beheld this scene?  
At last, outside the green  
rush door, he gave a shout,  
Vuong-Quan at once ran out,  
clasped his friend's hands, and showed him in.  
Old Mr. Vuong had been  
in the back room with Mrs. Vuong.  
Coming in them among  
their family, and seeing Kim,  
they went straight up to him  
and both burst into bitter tears.  
"Young man, it now appears"  
said the old man, "how low we've come.  
But still more burdensome  
is little Kieu's most cruel fate!  
Alas, she could not wait,  
as she had sworn, to be your wife;  
to save her father's life  
she sold herself in our distress.  
Yet with what bitterness  
and what reluctance did she leave!  
Although, you may conceive.*

Nhà tranh vách đất tả tôi,  
Lau treo rèm nát trúc cài phen thưa.  
Một sân đất cỏ dầm mưa,  
Càng ngao ngán nổi càng ngơ ngẩn đường!  
Đánh liều lên tiếng ngoài tường,  
Chàng Vương nghe tiếng vội vàng chạy ra.  
Dắt tay vội rước vào nhà,  
Mé sau viên ngoại ông bà ra ngay.  
Khóc than kể hết niềm tây:  
"Chàng ôi, biết nổi nước này cho chưa?  
"Kiều nhi phận mỏng như tờ,  
"Một lời đã lỗi tóc tơ với chàng!  
"Gặp cơn gia biến lạ đường.  
"Bán mình nó phải tìm đường cứu cha.  
"Dùng dằng khi bước chân ra,  
"Cực trăm nghìn nỗi dặn ba bốn lần.  
"Trót lời nặng với lang quân,  
"Mượn con em nó Thúy Vân thay lời.



*She was be set by many a care.  
she made her sister swear  
to keep the promise made to you.  
A thousand lives, said Kieu,  
would not diminish how she grieved  
that her love had deceived  
your love, she said, and wondered still  
if after death she will  
be able to repay her debt.  
We never shall forget  
those final words before she went.  
Oh, why has fortune sent  
such cruel blows to rain on you,  
my darling daughter Kieu ?  
Your Kim is home; where are you now?*

"Gọi là trả chút nghĩa người,  
"Sầu này đắng đặc muôn đời chưa quên!  
"Kiếp này duyên đã phụ duyên,  
"Dạ dài còn biết sẽ đền lai sinh.  
"Mấy lời kỷ chú dinh ninh.  
"Ghi lòng để dạ cất mình ra đi.  
"Phận sao bạc bấy Kiều nhi!  
"Chàng Kim về đó con thì đi đâu?"

*The old man knit his brow  
and grew more sad with every word.  
Young Kim, the more he heard,  
his features creased with grief the more.  
He fell down on the floor,  
he rent the air with sobs and sighs;  
pearl tears stood in his eyes;  
his face like flowers crushed on the ground.  
He fainted, then came round,  
only to weep once more, and when  
he fainted once again,  
then only did he cease to cry.  
The old man, knowing why  
the other wept, tried to control  
himself and to console  
the young man's grief. He therefore mused;  
The plank has now been used  
to build some other person's boat.  
She let her poor self float  
along the stream of cruel fate;  
Kieu therefore could not wait  
as promised, to become your wife  
Why sacrifice your life  
for her, which is so precious Kim?  
He tried to comfort him  
in many ways, and yet the more  
he tried to heal the sore,  
the greater grew the grief unloosed.*

Ông bà càng nói càng đau,  
Chàng càng nghe nói càng đau như dũa.  
Vật mình vấy gió tuôn mưa,  
Dầm dề giọt ngọc thấm thờ hồn mai!  
Đau đòi đoạn ngắt đòi thôi,  
Tĩnh ra lại khóc khóc rồi lại mê.  
Thấy chàng đau nỗi biệt ly,  
Nhịn ngừng, ông mới vỗ về giải khuyên:  
"Bây giờ ván đã đóng thuyền,  
"Đã đành phận bạc khôn đền tình chung!  
"Quá thương chút nghĩa dèo bông,  
"Nghìn vàng thân ấy, dễ hòng bỏ sao?"  
Dỗ dành khuyên giải trăm chiều,  
Lửa phiền càng dập càng khơi mối phiền.  
Thề xưa, giờ đến kim hoàn,  
Của xưa, lại giờ đến đàn với hương.  
Sinh càng trông thấy càng thương,  
Gan càng tức tối ruột càng xót xa.

*At last, old Vuong produced  
the pair of bracelets made of gold  
which, when in days of old  
they were engaged, Kim gave to Kieu  
together with the few  
sweet incense sticks and Thuy-Kieu's lute.  
The sight of these old mute  
reminders of a love now gone  
in Kim-Trong just brought on  
a deeper pity, sharper pain;  
grief tortured him again,  
and sadly he began to say,  
because I went away,  
Kieu lives now like a floating flower,  
which must risk every hour  
submersion by some swamping wave.  
The words we would engrave  
on gold or stone to seal our vow  
have they no value now?  
Though we could never share one bed  
I thought of us as wed;  
how could the flame of such love end?  
No matter what I spend  
or how far I must travel, still  
while life endures, I will  
search on, till I find Kieu again!  
He said much more, and then  
took tearful leave of Mr Vuong.*

Rằng:" Tôi trót quá chân ra,  
"Để cho đến nổi trôi hoa giạt bèo.  
"Cùng nhau thề thốt đã nhiều,  
"Những điều vàng đá phải điều nói không!  
"Chưa chẵn gối cũng vợ chồng,  
"Lòng nào mà nữ dứt lòng cho đang?  
"Bao nhiêu của mấy ngày trăng,  
"Còn tôi, tôi một gặp nàng mới thôi!"  
Nỗi thương nói chẳng hết lời,  
Tạ từ sinh mới sụt sùi trở ra.

*Kim hurried home; among  
the blossoms in his garden there  
he built a lodging where  
he asked the Vuongs to come and stay.  
He came there night and day  
fulfilling filial piety  
as Kieu had formerly,  
providing all that they might lack.  
Then, moistening the black  
ink tablet with his tears, he wrote  
with brush strokes many a note  
beseeching any evidence;  
and sparing no expense  
he sent men seeking news of Kieu;  
but always sent them to  
Weixian, as Ma-giam-Sinh had said  
in vain, because instead  
she had been taken to Yixian.  
Poor Kim's frustration then  
was boundless; he began to smart  
with grief, as though his heart  
was pierced by red-hot needles then.  
Just as a silkworm, when  
its silk is taken from it, grows  
emaciated, snows  
each winter wasted Kim away  
and, spending every day  
wrapped up in endless thoughts of Kieu,*

Vội về sửa chốn vườn hoa,  
Rước mời viên ngoại ông bà cùng sang.  
Thần hôn chăm chút lễ thường  
Dưỡng thân thay tấm lòng nàng ngày xưa.  
Đình ninh mài lệ chép thơ,  
Cắt người tìm tôi đưa tờ nhắn nhe.  
Biết bao công mướn của thuê,  
Lâm Thanh mấy độ đi về dặm khơi.  
Người một nơi hỏi một nơi,  
Mệnh mông nào biết bể trời nơi nao?  
Sinh càng thắm thiết khát khao,  
Như nung gan sắt như bào lòng son.  
Ruột trăm ngàn một héo hon,  
Tuyết sương ngày một hao mòn mình ve.  
Thần thờ lúc tỉnh lúc mê,  
Máu theo nước mắt hồn lìa chiêm bao.



*the poor lad never knew  
if he was dreaming of awake.  
With crying for her sake  
each tear had blood mixed in with it;  
his soul appeared to quit  
his flesh and float off in a dream.*

*Imagine the extreme  
anxiety to be found among  
Mr. and Mrs. Vuong  
and all of Kim's acquaintances.  
If things went on like this  
poor Kim would meet some dreadful end.  
They hastened to attend  
to all the preparations, and straightway  
chose a propitious day  
for Kim to wed Kieu's sister, Van.  
Thus one day soon began  
the union, in the prime of life  
of a graceful, lovely wife  
with a scholar of accomplishment.  
Although he was content  
to enjoy this marriage, somehow yet  
Kim never could forget  
the pain that tortured his poor heart.  
His new love, from the start,  
grew deep and strong; yet manifold  
more powerful grew the old.  
Kim, when reviewing Kieu's career  
shed many a bitter tear  
as if in pain in every bone.  
Sometimes he sat alone  
inside his study, and would hold  
the incense sticks of old  
then laid his fingers on the mute*

Xuân huyền lo sợ xiết bao,  
Quá ra khi đến thế nào mà hay!  
Vội vàng sắm sửa chọn ngày,  
Duyên Văn sớm đã xe dây cho chàng.  
Người yếu điệu kẻ văn chương,  
Trai tài gái sắc xuân đương vừa thì.  
Tuy rằng vui chữ vu quy,  
Vui này đã cái sầu kia được nào!  
Khi ăn ở lúc ra vào,  
Càng âu duyên mới càng dào tình xưa.  
Nỗi nàng nhớ đến bao giờ,  
Tuôn châu đòi trận vò tơ trăm vòng.  
Có khi vắng vẻ thu phòng,  
Đốt lò hương giờ phím đồng ngày xưa.  
Bế bài, rầu rĩ tiếng tơ,  
Trăm bay nhặt khói gió đưa lay rèm.  
Đường như bên nóc bên thềm,  
Tiếng Kiều đồng vọng bóng xiêm mơ màng.

*sad strings of Kieu's old lute.*  
*The sweet smoke rose, the curtain stirred ;*  
*it seemed as though he heard*  
*Kieu's voice once more upraised in song,*  
*and saw her pass along*  
*before his eyes as in a dream.*  
*Then sometimes it would seem*  
*as though his heart, true to the oath*  
*once made between them both*  
*and carved on stone, engraved on gold,*  
*saw, as in days of old,*  
*her face there when he dreamed of Kieu.*  
*His heart was rent in two*  
*with melancholy, night and day,*  
*while springtimes passed away*  
*and many autumns came along.*

*Bởi lòng tạc đá ghi vàng,  
Tuồng nàng nên lại thấy nàng về đây.  
Những là phiền muộn đêm ngày,  
Xuân thu biết đã đổi thay mấy lần?*

\*

*Then Vuong-Quan and Kim-Trong  
one day in springtime both excelled  
at competitions held  
for literary doctorates.  
As if high heaven's gates  
of cloud stood wide for their degrees,  
the many almond trees  
within the imperial garden cast  
down blossoms as they passed  
upon their graduation day;  
their fame spread far away  
as far as their own native wood  
Vuong-Quan who never would  
evade his duty, or forget  
his family's great debt  
to Mr Chung, then to repay  
him, married straight away  
his daughter, binding close their clans,  
as close as Zhous and Chans  
had once been liked in days of old,  
Kim-Trong, if truth were told,  
though he was raised to highest rank,  
his spirits slowly sank  
still lower when he thought of Kieu  
"My love, it was with you"  
he sadly said "that once I made  
my promised of jade  
and oaths of gold; but who is there*

Chế khoa gặp hội trường văn,  
Vương, Kim cùng chiếm bảng xuân một ngày.  
Cửa trời rộng mở đường mây,  
Hoa chào ngõ hạnh hương bay dặm phần  
Chàng Vương nhớ đến xa gần,  
Sang nhà Chung lão tạ ân chu tuyền.  
Tình xưa ân trả nghĩa đền,  
Gia thân lại mới kết duyên Châu Trần.  
Kim từ nhẹ bước thanh vân,  
Nỗi nàng càng nghĩ xa gần càng thương.  
Ấy ai dẫn ngọc thề vàng,  
Bây giờ kim mã ngọc đường với ai?  
Ngọn bèo chán sóng lạc loài,  
Nghĩ mình vinh hiển thương người lưu ly.

*with whom I now may share  
my jade and golden bliss today?*

*You are so far away  
lost like a flower afloat at sea.*

*My honours and degree  
cannot erase my grief at heart".*





*Then he was told to start  
and make his way to far Yixian,  
to fill a post which then  
fell vacant in that distant place.*

*The Vuongs knew in that case  
that they would have to go there too;  
for what else could they do  
but live there with their son-in-law?*

*They travelled miles, therefore,  
through town and mountain scenery.*

*Then settled peacefully  
in Kim's new residence straightway  
and listened night and day  
to lute-song and the cries of cranes.*

*Váng ra ngoại nhậm Lâm Tri,  
Quan sơn nghìn dặm thê nhi một đoàn.  
Cầm đường ngày tháng thanh nhàn,  
Sớm khuya tiếng hạc tiếng đàn tiêu dao.*

*Beneath the counterpanes  
behind drawn curtains printed each  
with flowers of plum and peach  
asleep one night Van dreamt of Kieu.*

*She told this vision to  
her husband, Kim, when they awoke.*

*On hearing how she spoke  
Kim wrestled with his doubt. He said*

*"I could have been misled;  
Weixian sounds very like Yixian.*

*When heart seeks heart again  
significance can hide in sounds  
At least we may have grounds,  
for optimism, anyway".*

*And so, the following day  
as soon as Kim began his court,  
he called his staff, and sought  
to find if they had heard of Kieu.*

*A secretary who  
was known as Do then made reply:*

*"Your Excellency, I  
remember well, ten years ago  
this matter, and I know  
the names of those involved therein;*

*Tu-Ba and Ma-Giam-Sinh.  
They bought a girl from Beijing who  
was called, I think, Thuy-Kieu;  
she played the lute extremely well*

Phòng xuân trướng rủ hoa đào,  
Nàng Vân năm bống chiêm bao thấy nàng.  
Tình ra mới rỉ cùng chàng,  
Nghe lời, chàng cũng hai đường tin nghi.  
Nọ Lâm Thanh với Lâm Tri,  
Khác nhau một chữ hoặc khi có lầm.  
Trong cơ thanh khí tương tằm,  
Ở đây hoặc có giai âm chẳng là?  
Thăng đường chàng mới hỏi tra,  
Họ Đô có kẻ lại già thưa lên:  
"Sự này đã ngoại mười niên,  
"Tôi đã biết mặt biết tên rành rành.  
"Tú bà cùng Mã Giám Sinh,  
Đi mua người ở Bắc kinh đưa về.  
"Thúy Kiều tài sắc ai bì,  
"Có nghề đàn lại đủ nghề văn thơ!  
"Kiên trình chẳng phải gan vừa,  
"Liều mình thế ấy phải lừa thế kia.

*and also could excel  
at poetry and literature.  
The poor girl was so pure  
that she, to keep her virtue, tried  
committing suicide.  
This failed; she was deceived again  
and had to suffer then  
a life of misery and shame.  
Soon after she became  
the second wife of Thuc-Ky-Tam.  
whose first wife, so I am  
informed, kidnapped Kieu wickedly  
and brought her to Wuxi  
so as to crush this fragile flower.  
So, in a desperate hour,  
the poor girl fled the house of Thuc;  
but such was her bad luck,  
she fell in with some folk named Bao;  
at once they sold her back  
straight to the red-lamp neighbourhood.  
She wandered where she could  
like floating flowers or drifting clouds.  
By chance, among the crowds,  
she met a man both brave and wise,  
who could stir up the skies,  
so powerful and so strong was he.  
Thousands of infantry  
at his command soon fell*

"Phong trần chịu đã ẽ chề,  
"Tơ duyên sau lại xe về Thúc lang.  
"Phải tay vợ cả phũ phàng,  
"Bắt về Vô-tích toan đường bẻ hoa.  
    Đĩa mình, nàng phải trốn ra,  
"Chẳng may lại gặp một nhà Bạc gia  
    "Thoắt buồn về thoắt bán đi,  
    "Mây trôi bèo nổi thiếu gì là nơi!  
    "Bỗng đâu lại gặp một người,  
"Hơn đời trí dũng nghiêng trời uy linh  
    "Trong tay mười vạn tinh binh,  
"Kéo về đóng chốt một thành Lâm Tri  
    "Tóc tơ các tích mọi khi,  
    "Oán thì trả oán ân thì trả ân.  
    "Đã nên có nghĩa có nhân,  
"Trước sau trọn vẹn xa gần ngợi khen.  
    "Chưa tường được họ được tên,  
"Sự này hỏi Thúc sinh viên mối tường".

upon the citadel  
at Yixian and so captured it.  
Kieu having once seen fit  
to tell her hero all her life,  
and being now his wife,  
her cause he straight away made his;  
all of her enemies  
with ruthless vengeance she pursued,  
and showed her gratitude  
to those who helped her on her way.  
Thus what she did that day  
made her renown spread like a blaze,  
and people sang the praise  
of all she did as good and just.  
Your excellency must  
enquire of Thuc-Ky-Tam the name  
of him who won such fame,  
for that, alas, I do not know.



When secretary Do  
 had finished all this history,  
 Kim-Trong immediately  
 dispatched a card to Mr Thuc  
 inviting him to look  
 Kim up the following afternoon.  
 Kim questioned Thuc, and soon  
 he asked about Kieu's husband's name.  
 "Once, when a moment came  
 when all were hiding from the war,  
 I questioned three or four  
 escaping soldiers", Thuc replied.  
 They willingly supplied  
 full enough facts to satisfy  
 your needs: the Lord Tu-Hai  
 was what Kieu's hero then was named.  
 His strength, so it was claimed,  
 surpassed that of ten thousand men.  
 He had already, when  
 he first met Kieu down in Taizhou,  
 fought many battles, so  
 it was no wonder one so brave  
 should marry one who gave  
 her beauty as a prize of war.  
 For many long years more  
 the fame of Tu-Hai's deeds increased,  
 and somewhere in the east  
 he set up his headquarters, though  
 I'm sorry I don't know  
 what happened to him after that".

Nghe lời Đò nói rõ ràng,  
Tức thì đưa thiệp mời chàng Thúc sinh.  
Nỗi nàng hỏi hết phân minh,  
Chồng con dâu tá tính danh là gì?  
Thúc rằng: "Gặp lúc hai ly,  
"Trong quân tôi hỏi thiếu gì tóc tơ.  
"Đại vương tên Hải họ Từ,  
"Đánh quen trăm trận sức dư muôn người.  
"Gặp nàng khi ở châu Thai.  
"Lạ gì quốc sắc thiên tài phải duyên.  
"Vầy vùng trong bấy nhiêu niên,  
"Làm nên động địa kinh thiên dùng dùng.  
"Đại quân đồn đóng cõi đông,  
"Về sau chẳng biết vân mông làm sao".

Poor Kim-Trong, as he sat  
and heard the views that Thuc expressed,  
grew more and more depressed;  
"A leaf he moaned" blown here and there,  
unable anywhere  
to escape life's dust-storms for an hour!  
A fragile drifting flower  
and at the mercy of the stream!  
I suffer an extreme  
of agony in thinking of  
how, Kieu, your times of love  
have always led partings soon.  
Although your life is strewn  
with violations of our oath,  
yet still I treasure both  
the incense fragments and your lute.  
How long will it stay mute?  
And will the incense once again  
be kindled into flame,  
or must it stay as cold as snow?  
While you drift to and fro  
can I in wealth and ease recline?  
Kim thought he might resign  
his post as mandarin that day  
and set off straight away  
across the mountains and the streams  
in search of all his dreams,  
of plunge into a battlefield;

Nghe tường ngành ngọn tiêu hao,  
Lòng riêng, chàng luống lao đao thần thờ.  
Xót thay chiếc lá bơ vơ,  
Kiếp trần biết giữ bao giờ cho xong?  
Hoa trôi nước chảy xuôi dòng,  
Xót thân chìm nổi đau lòng hợp tan!  
Lời xưa đã lỗi muôn vàn,  
Mảnh hương còn đó phím đàn còn dây.  
Đàn cầm khéo gắn ngơ dây,  
Lửa hương biết có kiếp này nữa thôi?  
Bình bông còn chút xa xôi,  
Đỉnh chung sao nở ăn ngồi cho an!  
Rắp mong treo ấn từ quan,  
Mấy sông cũng lội mấy ngàn cũng pha.  
Dấn mình trong áng can qua,  
Vào sinh ra tử họa là thấy nhau.  
Nghĩ điều trời thăm vực sâu  
Bóng chìm tăm cá biết đâu mà nhìn!

*for he had firmly steeled  
himself to risk his life for Kieu,  
if only he might view  
his well-beloved once again.  
"And yet," he pondered then,  
'it is a waste of time to try  
to find in all the sky  
one bird, or one fish in the sea!"*

*And so, while endlessly  
the days of sun and days of rain  
came round and round again,  
he waited on for news of Kieu;  
until one day a new  
appointment was received by Kim;  
a parchment came for him  
adorned with clouds of five bright hues,  
and bringing him the news  
he was transferred to far Nanping,  
moreover ordering  
Vuong-Quan to set off for Fouzhou.  
Waiting but to allow  
time to arrange for coaches, they  
set off, both the same way,  
together with their families.  
Now the disturbances  
of the revolt, they heard, had ceased;  
Fujian was now at peace,  
the flames of Zhejiang's wars were out.  
"Let us enquire about  
Kieu's misadventures while we can",  
Kim-Trong said to Vuong-Quan,  
"while we are on this journey now",*

Những là nán ná đợi tin,  
Nắng mưa biết đã mấy phen đổi dời?  
Năm mây bỗng thấy chiếu trời,  
Khâm ban sắc chỉ đến nơi rành rành.  
Kim thì cải nhậm Nam Bình,  
Chàng Vương cũng cải nhậm thành Phú Dương.  
Sấm sanh xe ngựa vội vàng,  
Hai nhà cũng thuận một đường phó quan.  
Xây nghe thế giặc đã tan,  
Sóng êm Phúc Kiến lửa tàn Chiết Giang.  
Được tin Kim mới rủ Vương,  
Tiện đường cùng lại tìm nàng sau xưa.

*Not till they reached Hangzhou  
did they hear certain news of Kieu;  
they met a man there who  
reported how some months before  
an outbreak of the war  
occurred near there in which, he said,  
"Lord Tu-Hai fell down dead,  
the victim of a cunning trick,  
while standing in the thick  
of battle on a hill near here.  
The Lady Kieu, I hear,  
was ill-paid by his enemies  
for all the services  
she gave unwittingly that day,  
for she was given away  
by order of the imperial  
army's chief general  
to wed a local mandarin.  
By throwing herself in,  
the stream she drowned her agonies;  
the Qian-tang River is  
The tomb of blushing beauty now"*



Hàng Châu đến đó bấy giờ,  
Thật tin hỏi được tóc tơ rành rành.  
Rằng: "Ngày hôm nọ giao bình,  
"Thất cơ, Từ đã thu linh trận tiền.  
"Nàng Kiều công cá chẳng đền,  
"Lệnh quan lại bắt ép duyên thố từ.  
"Nàng đã gieo ngọc trầm châu,  
"Sông Tiền đường đó, ấy mồ hồng nhan!"

*Alas, it seemed somehow  
as though Kim's coming here had led  
them far apart instead  
of reuniting them again.  
The family had then  
been honoured, all except for Kieu;  
she only was it who  
must suffer wrong for doing right.*

*Thương ôi! không hợp mà tan,  
Một nhà vinh hiển riêng oan một nàng!*

*By customary rite  
dead people's names were then displayed  
on wooden tablets laid  
upon an altar where they died;  
and therefore close beside  
the Qian-tang River, where it curved.  
Kim and the Vuongs observed  
the ritual in the open air,  
so that no matter where  
Kieu's soul might be, its woes might cease,  
and she might rest in peace  
beneath the silver-crested wave  
which she had made her grave  
where it unheedingly rolled on.  
Kim thought he saw a swan  
plunge in the water far away  
as Kieu had done one day;  
could she have been reborn a bird?  
And was it so absurd  
to wonder where her soul was now?*

Chiêu hồn thiết vị lễ thường,  
Giải oan, lập một đàn tràng bên sông.  
Ngọn triều non bạc trùng trùng,  
Vời trông còn tưởng cánh hồng lúc gieo.  
Tình thâm bể thẳm lạ điều,  
Nào hồn tinh vệ biết theo chốn nào?  
Cơ duyên đâu bỗng lạ sao,

*Suddenly, none knew how,  
 Abbess Giac-Duyen was standing there;  
 she came right up to where  
 the tablet was to read the name;  
 they heard the nun exclaim;  
 "Who are you? When did you arrive?  
 Thuy-Kieu is still alive!  
 Why weep as though she had been dead?  
 This filled them all with dread;  
 they introduced themselves in fear;  
 This is her fiancé here;  
 these are the parents of Thuy-Kieu;  
 brother and sister too;  
 and this one is her sister-in-law.  
 For long we have been sure  
 that Kieu was dead; you say she's not;  
 Reverend Mother, what  
 extraordinary news you bring!  
 The abbess answering  
 explained it to them this way. "She  
 has been as close to me  
 as plum stone to the plum, you know,  
 in Yixian long ago,  
 then by the Qian-tang here at last.  
 And therefore when she cast  
 her precious body in the flood.  
 I had already stood  
 waiting for when she would appear.*

Giác Duyên đầu bồng tìm vào đến nơi.  
Trông lên linh vị chữ bài,  
Thất kinh mới hỏi: "Những người đầu ta?  
"Với nàng thân thích gần xa,  
"Người còn sao bồng làm ma khóc người?"  
Nghe tin ngơ ngác rụng rời,  
Xúm quanh kẻ lẽ rộn lời hỏi tra:  
"Đây chồng này mẹ này cha,  
"Đây là em ruột này là em đau.  
"Thật tin nghe đủ bấy lâu,  
"Pháp sư dạy thờ sự đau lạ đương!"  
Sư rằng: "Nhơn quả với nàng,  
"Lâm Tri buổi trước Tiên Đường buổi sau.  
"Khi nàng gieo ngọc trầm châu,  
"Đón nhau tôi đã gặp nhau rước về.  
"Cùng nhau nương cửa bồ đề,  
"Thảo am đó cũng gần kề chẳng xa.  
"Phật tiền ngày bạc lân la,  
"Đăm đăm nàng cũng nhớ nhà khôn khuây".

*At last I found her here  
and took her to my little cell,  
where both of us now dwell  
protected by the Buddha's power.  
We have spent many an hour  
of peace and beauty in this place;  
yet sorrow clouds her face  
with thinking of her family".*



*What rapture could there be  
greater than theirs on hearing this?  
Their faces shone with bliss,  
for ever since this fragile folwer  
was torn away, each hour  
they sought for her on every brook;  
and even went to look  
on every cloud, in every cleft  
They thought that she had left  
her present life for evermore;  
each one had felt quire sure  
that they would only meet again  
through death's dark doorway, when  
reborn into some future form.  
And now amid the storm  
of life was found again the one  
whom they believed the sun  
would never shine upon again!*

Nghe tin nở mặt nở mày,  
Mừng nào lại quá mừng này nữa chăng?  
Từ phen chiếc lá lìa rừng,  
Thăm tìm luống những liễu chừng nước mây.  
Rõ ràng hoa rụng hương bay,  
Kiếp sau họa thấy kiếp này hẳn thôi.  
Minh dương đối ngả chắc rồi,  
Cõi trần mà lại thấy người cầu nguyên!

*They bowed to Giac-Duyen, then  
followed her, cutting through the reeds  
and shoulder-high thick reeds  
beside the river's twists and winds,  
still doubting in their minds  
whether they should believe Giac-Duyen;  
till they emerged within  
a clearing by a temple wall.  
The abbess gave a call  
and Kieu ran out at once, on feet  
in golden slippers neat  
as lotus flowers and as small sized.  
At once she recognised  
her family: her father still  
though old, not fallen ill;  
her mother still alert in mind;  
she was content to find  
her brother, sister, both grown strong;  
and finally, Kim-Trong,  
her truelove of the olden days.  
Kieu stood there in a daze;  
- what period was she living in?  
Was this thing genuine,  
or was she walking in a dream?  
And then a steady stream  
of tears like pearls fell on her dress;  
of joy, shame of distress?  
Her deep emotions who could sound?*

Cùng nhau lạy tạ Giác Duyên,  
Bộ hành một lũ theo liền một khi.  
Bè lau vạch cỏ tìm đi,  
Tình thâm lương hỷ hồ nghi nửa phần.  
Quanh co theo dải giang tân,  
Khỏi rừng lau đã tới sân Phật đường.  
Giác Duyên lên tiếng gọi nàng,  
Phòng trong vội đạo sen vàng bước ra.  
Trông xem đủ mặt một nhà:  
Xuân già còn khỏe huyên già còn tươi,  
Hai em phương trường hòa hai,  
Nọ chàng Kim đó là người ngày xưa!  
Tưởng bây giờ là bao giờ,  
Rõ ràng mở mắt còn ngờ chiêm bao!  
Giọt châu thánh thốt quện bào,  
Mừng mừng tủi tủi xiết bao là tình!  
Huyên già dưới gối gieo mình,  
Khóc than, mình kể sự mình đôn đôn.

*She knelt upon the ground  
and then embraced her mother's knees.  
Between her sobbing, these  
were all the words that they could hear;  
"Oh Mother, Mother dear,  
since, fifteen years ago, that day  
your daughter went away,  
and like a fragile, drifting flower,  
hazarding every hour  
submersion by each passing wave. . .  
I never even gave  
a thought to any circumstance  
that would give us the chance  
to meet again here in this life!*

"Từ con lai lạc quê người,  
"Bèo trôi sóng vỗ chốc mười lăm năm!"  
"Tính rằng sông nước cát lành,  
"Kiếp này, ai lại còn cầm gậy đây!"

*The old man and his wife  
took Kieu's hands and observed her face;  
there had not been a trace  
of change, it seemed; not since the day  
she had to go away  
could all the troubles she had got  
diminish by one jot  
her grace, or her good looks destroy.  
What scales could weigh their joy?  
How could one picture all they felt?  
So many things were dwelt  
upon of what had passed: Vuong-Quan,  
her sister too, Thuy-Van,  
made Kieu tell all she could recall.  
Kim stood and watched it all;  
his sorrow soon began to thaw,  
melting, at what he saw,  
into the common joy they felt.*

Ông bà trông mặt cầm tay,  
Dung quang chẳng khác chi ngày bước ra.  
Bấy chầy dãi nguyệt dầu hoa,  
Mười phần xuân có gầy ba bốn phần.  
Nỗi mừng biết lấy chi cân?  
Lời tan hợp chuyện xa gần thiếu dâu!  
Hai em hỏi trước han sau,  
Đúng trông, chàng cũng trở sầu làm tươi.



*Together next they knelt  
before the Buddha's altar there  
and thanked him in their prayer  
for bringing Kieu to life again.*

*Old Vuong then sent for men  
to bring chairs to the temple hall  
and which to carry all  
of them together home again.*

*But Kieu objected then;  
"Now am I just a fallen flower,  
I tasted hour by hour  
a bitter life for fifteen years.*

*In exile and in tears  
was where I thought my sad fate lay.*

*How could I dream today  
I would be here among you all?*

*Well that it should befall  
that Abbess Giac-Duyen here should save  
me from my watery grave -  
and joy at finding you again -  
these are sufficient then*

*to meet my long-held hopes in full.*

*Then, to live peaceable  
I swore, in this calm hermitage;*

*for I have reached the age  
when I should now retire at ease  
among the plants and tress  
like the ascetics with a vow.*

Quây nhau lạy trước Phật đài,  
Tái sinh trần tạ lòng người từ bi.  
Kiệu hoa giục giã tức thì,  
Vương ông dạy rước cùng về một nơi.  
Nàng rằng: "Chút phận hou rơi,  
"Nửa đời nếm trải mọi mùi đắng cay.  
"Tính rằng mặt nước chân mây.  
"Lòng nào còn tưởng có rày nữa không?  
"Được rày tái thế tương phùng,  
"Khát khao đã thỏa tấm lòng lâu nay!  
"Đã đem mình bỏ am mây.  
"Tuổi này gởi với cỏ cây cũng vừa.  
"Mùi thiền đã bén muối dưa,  
"Mùi thiền ăn mặc đã ưa nâu sồng.  
"Sự đời đã tắt lửa lòng.  
"Còn chen vào chốn bụi hồng làm chi!  
"Dở dang nào có hay gì,  
"Đã tu tu trót quá thì thì thôi!  
"Trùng sinh ân nặng bể trời,  
"Lòng nào nỡ dứt nghĩa người ra đi!"

*I have grown used by now  
to eating food the worldling loathes  
and wearing only clothes  
dyed as a nun's in deepest brown.  
All passion has died down;  
why plunge me in the world again?  
What good would that be, when  
I always want to stay a nun?  
Besides, to serve the one  
who saved my life counts more to me  
than all the sky and sea;  
the abbess needs me by her side".*

*Her father then replied:  
"Religious regulations may  
have sometimes to give way  
to unique sets of circumstance.  
And so if you should chance  
to dedicate yourself each day  
to trying hard to pray  
to Buddha and the Immortals, who  
would pay your debt for you  
to Kim and filial piety?  
However, should it be  
instead of that that you could find  
the service of mankind,  
for the Almighty Buddha's sake,  
the way of life to take,  
we'll build a temple, and invite  
with very great delight  
the Abbess there to live with you."  
On hearing this, Thuy-Kieu  
now let her father have his way,  
they gathered round to say  
farewell to Giac-Duyen, then they went.*

Ông rằng: "Bỉ thử nhất thì,  
"Tu hành thì cũng phải khi tòng quyền.  
"Phải điều cầu Phật cầu Tiên,  
"Tình kia hiếu nọ, ai đền cho đây?  
"Độ sinh nhờ đức cao dày,  
"Lập am rồi sẽ rước thầy ở chung".  
Nghe lời, nàng phải chiều lòng,  
Giã sư giã cảnh đều cùng bước ra.

*When they got home, they sent  
for wine made from chrysanthemum  
because they had become  
a reunited family.*

*In the festivity  
a cordial atmosphere had spread  
when Van stood up and said.  
"Heaven made a marriage long ago;  
two persons met, and so  
were joined by one word which they gave.*

*But like a tidal wave  
misfortune swept one far beyond  
our ken; the marriage bond  
was tied for me which should be Kieu's.*

*The magnet cannot lose  
its permanent attractiveness  
for iron, though; no less  
charged amber for a mustard seed.*

*Thuy-Kieu and I, indeed,  
are of the selfsame flesh and blood.*

*There always was a bud  
of dormant hope within my heart,  
the years we were apart.*

*What love I felt for absent Kieu!*

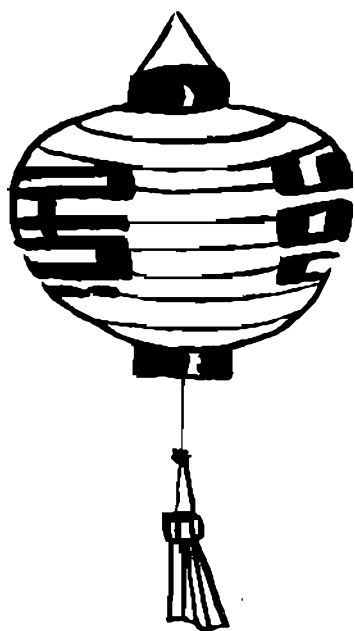
*Once broken now the two  
clear halves of mirror form a pair.*

*Heaven planned the whole affair  
and chose them for each other then.*

Một nhà về đến quan nha,  
Đoàn viên vội mở tiệc hoa vui vầy.  
Tàng tàng chén cúc dờ say,  
Đứng lên Văn mới giải bày một hai.  
Rằng: "Trong tác hợp cơ trời,  
"Hai bên gặp gỡ một lời kết giao.  
"Gặp cơn bình địa ba đào,  
"Vậy đem duyên chị buộc vào cho em.  
"Cũng là phận cải duyên kim,  
"Cũng là máu chảy ruột mềm chớ sao?  
"Nhưng là rày ước mai ao,  
"Mười lăm năm ấy biết bao nhiêu tình!  
"Bấy giờ gương vỡ lại lành,  
"Khuôn thiếp lửa lọc đã dành có nơi.  
"Còn duyên may lại còn người,  
"Còn vàng trắng bạc còn lời nguyên xưa.  
"Quả mai ba bảy dương vừa,  
"Đào non sớm liệu xe tơ kịp thì!"

*Now Kieu is here again  
time has not cut the bonds of love;  
the moon still shines above  
as witness to their former vow.  
Like peaches, Kieu has now  
late in the autumn reached her prime;  
let's pluck the fruit in time  
to serve it for a wedding feast!*





*As soon as Van had ceased  
her sister Kieu protested, though;  
This happened years ago,  
why bring it up again just now?  
We did exchange a vow  
but when I hear it once more named  
it makes me so ashamed;  
stained by the stormy life I've led  
windswept and buffeted  
I am not fit to be a bride.  
Let time's fast-ebbing tide  
suck these old memories away.  
"Well what a thing to say".  
Kim-Trong exclaimed "you want that now  
but what about your vow?  
With earth and sky as witnesses  
we made our promises;  
then let our oaths firm fixed be proved  
though all on earth be moved  
and stars start falling from the sky!  
Whether we live or die  
our love should join us heart and soul  
and marriage be its goal;  
why should you wish it to divide?"  
"Of course", Thuy-Kieu replied  
"it's certain such a union  
would be a happy one  
when deep affection forms the link;*

Dứa lời, nàng vội gạt đi:  
"Sự muôn năm cũ kể chi bây giờ?  
"Một lời tuy có ước xưa,  
"Xét mình dải gió dầu mưa đã nhiều.  
"Nói càng hổ thẹn trăm chiều.  
"Thà cho ngọn nước thủy triều chảy xuôi!"  
Chàng rằng: "Nói cũng lạ đời,  
Dấu lòng kia vậy còn lời ấy sao?  
"Một lời đã trót thâm giao,  
"Dưới đây có đất trên cao có trời!  
"Dấu rằng vật đổi sao dời,  
"Từ sinh cũng giữ lấy lời tử sinh!  
"Duyên kia có phụ chi tình,  
"Mà toan sẽ gánh chung tình làm hai?"  
Nàng rằng: "Gia thất duyên hài,  
"Chút lòng ân ái, ai ai cũng lòng.  
"Nghĩ rằng trong đạo vợ chồng,  
"Hoa thơm phong nhị trăng vòng tròn gương.

but even so, I think  
a woman when she weds should be  
a flower that's known no bee,  
pure as the mirror of the moon,  
her faithfulness a boon  
more precious than the finest gold.  
Oh Kim, I am not bold  
enough to stand with you, dear, though  
you loved me long ago  
before a marriage altar now.  
Since first we made our vow  
how many bees have come to sip  
the nectar of my lip!  
What moon could keep its mirror clear  
from tarnish and from smear  
when ravished so by wind and rains!  
Alas, what now remains  
of beauty in your blushing bride?  
I might as well have died;  
I cannot start a new life now;  
nor could I now allow  
myself to wear a wedding-dress.  
However much you stress  
your love for me, yet when I came  
before the nuptial flame  
I should feel so ashamed, God knows.  
From now on I shall close  
the door of my late-autumn room,

"Chữ trình đáng giá nghìn vàng,  
"Đuốc hoa chẳng thẹn với chàng mai xưa.  
"Thiếp từ ngộ biến đến giờ,  
"Ong qua bướm lại đã thừa xấu xa.  
"Bấy chầy gió táp mưa sa,  
"Mấy trăng cũng khuyết mấy hoa cũng tàn.  
"Còn chi là cái hồng nhan,  
"Đã xong thân thế còn toan nối nào?  
"Nghĩ mình chẳng hổ mình sao,  
"Dám đem trần cấu dục vào bố kinh!  
"Đã hay chàng nặng vì tình,  
"Trông hoa đèn chẳng thẹn mình lắm ru!  
"Từ rày khép cửa phòng thu,  
"Chẳng tu thì cũng như tu mới là!  
"Chàng dù nghĩ đến tình xa,  
"Đem tình cầm sắt đổi ra cầm cờ.  
"Nói chi kết tóc xe tơ,  
"Đã buồn cả ruột mà sợ cả đời!"

*attempting to assume  
the life of a religious, though  
I clearly have been no  
religious woman hitherto.  
"Think of our love", said Kieu  
"not as erotic songs for lute  
or soft seductive flute;  
more as a friendly game of chess.  
It is quite profitless  
to talk of love and marriage then,  
to start my grief again  
and spoil the rest of your life, too!"*



*"You plead your case well, Kieu",  
said Kim, "but you must not forget  
that there are others yet  
besides ourselves, who are involved.*

*Before you can have solved  
where Woman's duty rightly lies  
you'll learn, if you are wise  
how to adapt to circumstance,  
whether it be, by chance  
extraordinary or usual.*

*Unyielding principle  
can't be adhered to slavishly  
as you showed patently  
by sacrificing one great good -  
your chastity - you could  
perform your filial piety.*

*Your body's purity  
could not be stained by such a course.*

*Since Heaven's almighty force  
brought us together here today,  
think how clouds melt away  
in heaven before the sun's bright power.*

*The so-called withered flower  
looks fresher now and free from stain:  
the moon, though on the wane  
seems brighter it was when full.*

*Then why let false doubts pull  
you this way and then that, my sweet?*



Chàng rắng: "Khéo nói nên lời,  
"Mà trong lẽ phải có người có ta!  
"Xưa nay trong đạo đàn bà,  
"Chữ trinh kia cũng có ba bảy đường:  
"Có khi biến có khi thường,  
"Có quyền nào phải một đường chấp kinh.  
"Nhu nàng lấy hiếu làm trinh,  
"Bụi nào cho đục được mình ấy vay?  
"Trời còn để có hôm nay,  
"Tan sương đầu ngõ vén mây giữa trời.  
"Hoa tàn mà lại thêm tươi,  
"Trăng tàn mà lại hơn mười rằm xưa.  
"Có điều chi nữa mà ngờ,  
"Khách qua đường để hững hờ chàng Tiều!"  
Nghe chàng nói đã hết điều,  
Hai thân thì cũng quyết theo một bài.  
Hết lời khôn lẽ chối lời,  
Cúi đầu nàng những ngẩn dài thở than.

*What, do you want to treat  
me as a passer-by instead?"*  
*On hearing what Kim said*  
*Kieu's parents reinforced his plea;*  
*how could she disagree?*  
*She sighed and meekly bowed her head.*

*A sumptuous feast was spread  
to celebrate the wedding day  
torches like flowers in May  
shed rosy glows on folds of silk  
with roses white as milk  
embroidered on draped and arranged.  
Then Kim and Kieu exchanged  
their greetings with their family.  
Perfect rite, perfectly  
uniting them, a perfect match.*

*Nhà vừa mở tiệc đoàn viên,  
Hoa soi ngọn đuốc hồng chen bức là.  
Cùng nhau giao bái một nhà,  
Lễ dà đủ lễ đôi dà xứng đôi.*

*Much later, when the latch  
was lowered where they could recline  
alone, they shared some wine  
in cups of polished tortoiseshell.  
And yet, though they were well  
contented to be wed at last  
the flavour of the past  
filled memory with sweet regret.  
Oh, how could they forget  
the time when lotus-flower in spring  
was hardly blossoming  
and when the tender peach hung near?  
This was the fifteenth year  
the day they longed for then had come;  
how many burdensome  
events had taken place since then  
they fell in love, as when  
predestined, and they pledged their troth  
but when they took their oath  
immediately they said farewell;  
then had to pass through hell  
to reach this paradise at last.*

*Động phòng diu dặt chén mời,  
Bâng khuâng duyên mới ngậm ngùi tình xưa.  
Những từ sen ngó dào tơ.  
Mười lăm năm mới bây giờ là đây!*

*The night was nearly past  
and outside in the starlit sky  
the moon was hanging high  
beside the deep-fringed curtain, made  
of richest silk brocade,  
the lamps enhanced Kieu's charm each hour.*

*Face-to-face with the flower  
which had attracted him before,  
Kim loved her more and more,  
drawn to her like a drowsy bee.*

*"My fate is fixed", said she  
"what is my body worth of?"*

*I know your former love  
remains engraved upon your heart  
and so, to play my part  
as best I could, I took your name  
but oh, the inner shame!*

*And what will people think of me?*

*For even though they see  
your love for me shown plain and clear  
how would I dare appear  
beside you then, do you suppose?*

*Are you to look like those  
who pick up incense from the ground,  
or pluck flowers all around  
when they have started to decay?*

*To make your wife display  
her shame to all would not be love*

Tình duyên ấy hợp tan này,  
Bi hoan mấy nỗi đêm chày trắng cao.  
Canh khuya bức gấm rủ thao,  
Dưới đèn tỏ dạng má đào thêm xuân.  
Tình nhân lại gặp tình nhân,  
Hoa xưa ong cũ mấy phân chung tình!  
Nàng rằng: "Phận thiệp đã đành,  
"Có làm chi nữa cái mình bỏ đi!  
"Nghĩ chàng nghĩa cũ tình ghi,  
"Chiều lòng gọi có xướng tùy mây may.  
"Riêng lòng đã thẹn lắm thay,  
"Cũng đà mặt dạn mày dày khó coi!  
"Những như âu yếm vành ngoài,  
"Còn toan mở mặt với người cho qua?  
"Lại như những thói người ta,  
"Vết hương dưới đất bẻ hoa cuối mùa.  
"Khéo là giờ nhuốc bày trò,  
"Còn tình đâu nữa là thù đấy thói!"



*but more a token of  
a callous sort of disrespect;  
to love me would subject  
you to ill-fame; you see then how  
to love each other now  
is ten times worse than faithlessness!*

*If you won't rest unless  
you've children for posterity  
why should you turn to me?  
My younger sister will consent.*

*What little element  
of honour I may still retain  
I beg you to refrain  
from trampling underneath your feet  
"Love" stands on every street  
to satisfy your appetite  
why waste your time tonight  
caressing such a withered flower?"*

"Người yêu, ta xấu với người,  
"Yêu nhau thì lại bằng mười phụ nhau!  
"Cửa nhà dù tính về sau,  
"Thì còn em đó lọ cầu chi đây!  
"Chữ trình còn một chút này,  
"Chẳng cần cho vững lại giày cho tan!  
"Còn nhiều ân ái chan chan,  
"Hay gì vầy cánh hoa tàn mà chơi?"

*"One word united our  
two hearts", Kim answered heart; "then my heart  
and yours were torn apart  
as far as fish from flying bird.*

*If only you had heard  
how much I wept while you were gone.  
I thought, when you had sworn,  
that you would weep to break your oath.*

*We vowed that we would both  
for ever love each other then;  
and now we meet again  
my love is as it's always been.*

*The willow still looks green,  
as fresh as in our springtime days;  
our bond of love still stays;  
your mirror shows no trace of dust*

*I swear to you just  
respect you more each day, dear Kieu.*

*For years I searched for you,  
as for a needle in the sea,  
with true sincerity,*

*and not to gain some casual love.*

*I never dreamt then of  
our being beneath one roof indeed;  
therefore I see no need  
to share one pillow and one sheet  
for life to be as sweet  
as harmonising harp and lute".*

Chàng rằng: "Gắn bó một lời,  
 "Bỗng không cá nước chim trời lữ nhau.  
 "Xót người lưu lạc bấy lâu,  
 "Tưởng thề thốt nặng cũng đau đớn nhiều!  
 "Thương nhau sinh tử đã liều,  
 "Gặp nhau còn chút bấy nhiêu là tình.  
 "Chùng xuân tơ liễu còn xanh,  
 "Nghĩ rằng chưa thoát khỏi vònh ái ân.  
 "Gương trong chẳng chút bụi trần  
 "Một lời quyết hẳn muôn phần kính vâng!  
 "Bấy lâu đây bể mò kim,  
 "Là nhiều vàng đá phải tìm trăng hoa?  
 "Ai ngờ lại hợp một nhà,  
 "Lọ là chần gối mới ra sắt cầm!"  
 Nghe lời, sửa áo cài trâm.  
 Khấu đầu lạy tạ cao thâm nghìn trùng:  
 "Thân tàn, gặp được khơi trong.  
 "Là nhờ quân tử khác lòng người ta.

*As Kim did not dispute  
her own suggestion, Kieu knelt down  
having done up her gown  
and pinned back in its place her plait  
to thank her husband that  
his understanding was so great;*

*"If we can separate  
pure water from my muddy life  
dear Kim", remarked his wife,  
"it is because you're so sincere  
and every word I hear  
comes from the bottom of your heart.*

*You are a man apart  
from ordinary selfish men;  
it's true compassion when  
you understand me as you do.  
My shield and strength are you;  
what more could I have wished for then?*

*For I have found again  
my honour and good name tonight".*

*"Mấy lời tâm phúc ruột rà,  
"Tương tri đường ấy mới là tương tri!  
"Chờ che dùm bọc thiếu gì?  
"Trăm năm danh tiết cũng vì dèm nay!"*

*Hand clasping sweet hand tight  
each thought the other wise and chaste*

*Kim lit a candle, placed  
more incense on the charcoal of  
the brazier, like their love  
warm and bright they saw it shine.*

*They emptied cups of wine  
to celebrate their happiness  
how could they then suppress  
their old love flowing back again?*

*And so, remembering when  
Kieu once had played sweet tunes to him  
upon the lute, now Kim  
asked her to play the same once more.*

*The lute I played before  
bewitched us in its web of strings;  
the siren-song it sings  
deceived and led us both astray  
until this very day  
said Kieu, "but that's all over now.*

*And so, to show you how  
submissive still your true love stays  
dear friend of olden days,  
I want to play it one more time".*

*Her fingers with sublime  
agility danced on the strings;  
the incense smoke in rings  
rose and fell with the melody.*

Thoắt thôi tay lại cầm tay,  
Càng yêu vì nết càng say vì tình.  
Thêm nển giá nổi hương bình,  
Cùng nhau lại chuốc chén quỳnh giao hoan.  
Tình xưa lai láng khôn hàn,  
Thong dong lại hỏi ngón đàn ngày xưa.  
Nàng rằng: "Vì mấy đường tơ,  
"Làm người cho đến bây giờ mới thôi!  
"Ăn năn thì sự đã rồi!  
"Nể lòng người cũ vâng lời một phen".  
Phím đàn diu dặt tay tiên,  
Khói trầm cao thấp tiếng huyền gần xa.  
Khúc đầu dăm ấm dương hòa,  
Ấy là hồ điệp hay là Trang sinh.  
Khúc đầu êm ái xuân tình,  
Ấy hồn Thục đế hay mình đồ quỳên?  
Trong sao châu nhỏ duềnh quỳên,  
Ấm sao hạt ngọc Lam-diền mới đông!  
Lọt tai nghe suốt năm cung,  
Tiếng nào là chẳng não nùng xôn xao.



*Kim wondered silently  
so flower-like did the music seem,  
had he begun to dream  
or changed into a butterfly?  
The next piece, soaring high  
as sweet as love in spring, he heard;  
was it some plaintive bird  
or the soul of some dead emperor?  
The clear notes seemed to pour  
like raindrops in a moonlit pool  
or like bright dew-fall, cool  
at sunrise on a mountain top.  
Kim wished she would not stop,  
and yearned that she should never fail  
to use the five-tone scale  
to weave new tunes, entralling him.  
"These melodies", cried Kim,  
are they the ones you used to play?  
They sound so gay today  
yet were so sad then at the start.  
Is it because your heart  
is happy after so much grief?  
Kieu answered "My belief  
is that this very humble skill  
of mine has brought us ill:  
"Cruel Fate" has dogged us all our life  
Now that I am your wife  
we understand so many things;  
I want to coil these strings  
and never touch them any more".*

Chàng rằng: "Phổ ấy tay nào?  
"Xưa sao sâu thăm nay sao vui vầy?  
"Tẻ vui bởi tại lòng này,  
"Hay là khổ tận đến ngày cam lai?"  
Nàng rằng: "Vì chút nghề chơi,  
"Đoạn trường tiếng ấy hại người bấy lâu!  
"Một phen tri kỷ cùng nhau,  
"Cuốn dầy từ đấy về sau cũng chừa".

*No time remained to pour  
their inmost feelings out that night  
for with the dawning light  
cocks crowed in their vicinity.*

*Kim told Kieu's family  
the way of life they had devised.*

*They were all most surprised  
and could not help but spread the news  
of virtue such as Kieu's;  
she was not such a one by far  
as many ladies are  
who trade in peaches in the morn  
and then with faithless scorn  
sell plums to others in the night!*

*Chuyện trò chưa cạn tóc tơ,  
Gà dà gáy sáng trời vừa rạng đông.  
Tình riêng, chàng lại nói sòng,  
Một nhà ai cũng lạ lòng khen lao.  
Cho hay thực nữ chí cao,  
Phải người sớm muộn tối dào như ai?*

## EPILOGUE

*Thus love's and friendship's might  
combined to reunite these friends.  
Toghether they could spend  
the time as they intended to  
Kim did not share with Kieu  
one sheet and pillow through the night,  
but found his chief delight  
playing the lute, reciting verse.  
Nor were the two averse  
to drink some wine, converse for hours  
watch blossoming of flowers,  
to test each other's powers at chess  
or with a fond caress  
to watch the rising crescent moon.  
Their duties done so soon  
they both were opportunely now  
linked by their marriage vow  
and by strong friendship's powerful chain.  
Remembering again  
their promise, with great pains they found  
a quiet piece of ground  
to build a shrine around a court.  
A messenger then sought  
Giac-Duyen because they thought that she*

*Hai tình vẹn vẻ hòa hai,  
Chẳng trong chãn gối cũng ngoài cầm thơ.  
Khi chén rượu khi cuộc cờ,  
Khi xem hoa nở khi chờ trăng lên.  
Ba sinh đã phỉ mười nguyên,  
Duyên đôi lứa cũng là duyên bạn bầy.  
Nhớ lời, lập một am mây,  
Khiến người thân tín rước thầy Giác Duyên.  
Đến nơi, đóng cửa cài then,  
Rêu trùn kẽ ngạch cỏ lên mái nhà.  
Sư đà hái thuốc phương xa,  
Mây bay hạc lánh biết là tìm đâu?  
Nặng vì chút nghĩa bấy lâu,  
Trên am cứ giữ hương dầu hôm mai.*

would live there happily;  
but when he reached where he supposed  
she lived, the doors were closed  
the walls were decomposed by moss,  
and grass had grown across  
the altar where the joss-sticks stood.  
Giac-Duyen had said she would  
go to a neighbourhood she knew  
remote from human view  
where use ful herbs accumulate;  
but where does one locate  
a lost cloud or migrating crane?  
Kieu set out to maintain  
the oil and incense, rain or shine  
each day within the shrine  
in memory of her fine old friend.





*Riches seemed to descend  
with joy upon them endlessly.*

*The whole Vuong family  
enjoyed prosperity at last  
and Kim-Trong often passed  
to many a higher-classed new post.*

*Thuy-Van was quite engrossed  
in bringing up a host of young  
like some great tree which hung  
as shade for shoots sprung up around.*

*Few families were found  
to rival their abounding fame  
and folk will speak their name  
for centuries, the same as then  
as joyful happy men  
who left great riches when they died.*

*Một nhà phúc lộc gồm hai,  
Nghìn năm đẳng đặc quan giai lần lần.  
Thừa gia chẳng hết nàng Vân,  
Một cây cù mộc một sân quế hòe.  
Phong lưu phú quý ai bì,  
Vườn xuân một cửa để bia muôn đời.*

✱

*It cannot be denied  
 that Heaven alone decides our fate;  
 come, let us meditate;  
 if life is filled with great events,  
 accepting what is sent  
 our soul must be adventurous;  
 if Heaven sends to us  
 a life innocuous and calm  
 then with a gentle charm  
 we must live pure and harmlessly.*

*Quite indiscriminately  
 Heaven parcels destiny to all;  
 if fortune should befall  
 the genius, none would call that just!  
 If talented, you must  
 not place in that your trust complete;  
 if she is not discreet  
 a happy miss may meet mishap!*

*Whatever handicap  
 we carry, let us strap it on;  
 when you your armour don  
 blame not on Heaven the consequence.*

*Make pure your heart, and thence  
 a pure life's excellence will pour  
 pure hearts are worth far more  
 than mere endowment's tawdry fame.*

Ngắm hay muôn sự tại trời,  
Trời kia đã bắt làm người có thân,  
Bắt phong trần phải phong trần,  
Cho thanh cao mới được phần thanh cao.  
Có đâu thiên vị người nào,  
Chữ tài chữ mệnh dồi dào cả hai.  
Có tài mà cậy chi tài,  
Chữ tài liền với chữ tai một vần.  
Đã mang lấy nghiệp vào thân,  
Cũng đừng trách lẫn trời gần, trời xa.  
Thiện căn ở tại lòng ta,  
Chữ tâm kia mới bằng ba chữ tài.

\*

Lời què chấp nhật đông dài,  
Mua vui cũng được một vài trống canh.

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**PRINTED IN VIETNAM**  
GP : 89/CXB



The tale of Kieu is the most popular poem in the Vietnamese language. Now, for the first time, it is published in a rhyming English version which faithfully reproduces the meter and character of the original.

Michael Counsell was born in England in 1935 and graduated from Cambridge University. He lived with his wife and their first child in South Vietnam for more than three years beginning in 1968, and in that time came to love the Vietnamese scenery, people and culture. He also learnt to speak a little of the Vietnamese language, but not fluently enough to be called a translator.

He read "Kim, Van and Kieu" in an English prose translation and was impressed by its power as literature, and the way it symbolizes the suffering of the Vietnamese people. He felt that it deserved a wider readership, and a verse translation by a native English speaker, and for the next twenty-five years made it his hobby to transform it into English poetry. He now lives in London.

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