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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

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; Yuch; 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, back-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"

Jaο-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

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.*

Bản tiếng Việt in theo: *Kiều*, Nhà xuất bản đại học và trung học chuyên nghiệp,
Hà-nội, 1976.

*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 cố lục còn truyền sử xanh.
Rằng: Năm Gia-Tĩnh triều Minh,
Bốn phương phẳng lặng hai kinh vĩng vàng.
Có nhà viên ngoại họ Vương,
Gia tư nghỉ cũng thường thường bậc trung.
Một trai con thứ rớt 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".*

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.
Thông 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 nảo 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 đềm 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.
Đập dìu tài tử giai nhân,
Ngựa xe như nước áo quần như nêm.
Ngón 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 đút 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 hiềm gì yển anh.
"Kiếp hồng nhan có mong manh.
"Nửa chừng xuân thoát gầy 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 chãng mà,
"Thì chi chút ước gọi là duyên sau.
"Sấm sanh nếp tử xe châu,
"Bụi hồng một nắm mặc dầu cỏ hoa.
"Trái 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
 al! 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 môi má hồng phai pha.
"Sống làm vợ khắp người ta,
"Khéo thay thác xuống làm ma không chờ!
"Nào người phượng chạ loan chung,
"Nào người tiếc lục tham hồng là ai?
"Đã không kể đoái người hoài,
"Sẵn đây ta kiếm một vài nén hương.
"Gọi là gặp gỡ giữa đường,
"Họa là người dưới suối 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 giặt 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 chớ 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 ngã 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.
 Đè chùng 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 dăng nửa ở nửa về,
Nhạc vàng đầu đã tiếng nghe gần gần.
Trông chừng thấy một văn nhân,
Lông buống tay khâu bước lẫm dẫm 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 lẫm 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,
Vớ 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 thềm yêu chốc mòng.
May thay giải cấu tương phùng,
Gặp tuần đố lá thỏ lòng tìm hoa.
Bóng hồng nhác thấy nẻo xa,
Xuân lan thu cúc, mặ mà cả hai.
Người quốc sắc kẻ thiên tài,
Tình trong như đã mặt ngoài còn e.
Chập chờn cơn tình cơn mế,
Rón ngời chẳng tiện dứt ngời chín khôn.
Bóng tà như giục cơn buồn,
Khách dà 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 đãng 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 số 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 vẫy đủ mười khúc ngâm,
Xem thơ nức nở khen thắm:
"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 dâu sịch bức màn manh,
Tình ra mới biết rằng mình chiêm bao.
Trông theo nào thấy dâu nào,
Hương thừa đường hãy ra vào dâu 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 chày,
Đường xa nghĩ nỗi sau này mà kinh!
Hoa trôi bèo giạt đã đành,
Biết duyên mình biết phận mình, thế thôi!
Nỗi riêng lớp lớp sóng đời,
Nghĩ đòi cơn lại sụt sùi đòi cơn.
Giọng Kiều rền rĩ trướng loan,
Nhà huyền chợt tỉnh, hỏi: "Cơn có gì?"
"Có sao trần trọc canh khuya,
"Màu hoa lê hã đãm dề giọt mưa?"
Thưa rằng: "Chút phận ngáy thơ,
"Dưỡng sinh đôi nợ tóc tơ chưa đền.
"Buổi ngày chơi má Đạm Tiên,
"Nhấp đi thoát thấy ứng liền chiêm bao.
"Đoạn trường là số thế nào,
"Bài 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 chước 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 dong càng lắc càng dầy,
Ba thu dồn lại một ngày dài ghè!
Mây Tần khoá kín song the,
Bụi hồng liệu nẻo đi về chiêm bao.
Tuần trăng khuyết đĩa dầu hao,
Mặt mơ tương mặt lòng ngao ngán lòng.
Buồng vãn hơi giá như đồng.
Trúc se ngọn thổi tơ chùng phím loan.
Mành Tương phát phát gió đàn,
Hương gáy 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 ngấm trong vắt thấy gì nữa đâu!
Gió chiều như giục con sàu,
Vi lô hiu hắt như màu khơi trêu.
Nghề riêng nhớ ít tưởng nhiều,
Xăm xăm dè nẻo Lam-kiều lẫn sang.
Thâm nghiêm kín cổng cao tường,
Cạn dòng lá thắm dứt đường chim xanh.
Lơ thơ tơ liễu buông màn,
Con oanh học nói trên cành mĩ mai.
Mấy lần cửa đóng then cài,
Dấy thềm hoa rụng biết người ở đâu?
Tần ngần đứng suốt giờ lâu,
Đạo 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, dề 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 hẳn duyên trời chi đây!
Song hồ nửa khép cánh mây,
Tường đông ghé mắt ngày ngò hăng trông.
Tác 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.*

Nhãn từ quán khách lìn la,
Tuần trăng thắm thoát nay đã thêm hai.
Cách tường phải buổi êm trời,
Dưới dào dạt có bóng người thướt tha.
Buông cầm xúc áo vội rà,
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 âu người ấy báu này,
"Chẳng duyên chưa để vào tay ai cầm!"
Liền tay ngắm nghía 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 ước 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 nã lòng người bấy nay!
"Bấy lâu mới được một ngày,
"Dùng 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,⁶
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 rû mòn,
"Lăn lita ai biết hãy còn hôm nay!
"Tháng tròn như gởi cung mây,
"Trần trần một phận áp cây đã liễu!
"Tiện đây xin một hai điều,
"Đài gương soi đến dấu bèo cho chăng?"
Ngần ngừ, nàng mới thưa rằng:
"Thối nhà băng tuyết chất hăng phi phong,
"Dù khi lá thắm chỉ hồng.
"Nền 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 da mang,
"Một lời vàng tạc đá vàng thủy chung".
Được lời như cởi 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 tở dầy,
"Của tin gọi một chút này làm ghi".
Sẵn tay khăn gấm quạt quỳ
Với cành thoa ấy, tức thì đổi trao.
Một lời vữa gắn tái giao,
Mái sau đường có xôn xao tiếng người.
Với vàng lá rụng hoa rơi,
Chàng về viện sách nàng đời lâu 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 đầu 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 thoãn 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 dối sầu,
"Tuyết sương nhuộm nửa mái đầu hoa râm".
Nàng rằng : "Gió bắt mưa cầm,
"Đã cam tộ với tri âm bấy chày.

*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.
Xấn 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 nguyền 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 ở 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 ngắm 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 ngăn chẳng dầy gang,
Trông ra ác dã ngậm gương non doài.
Vắng nhà chẳng tiện ngồi dai,
Giã chàng, nàng mới kíp đời 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.*



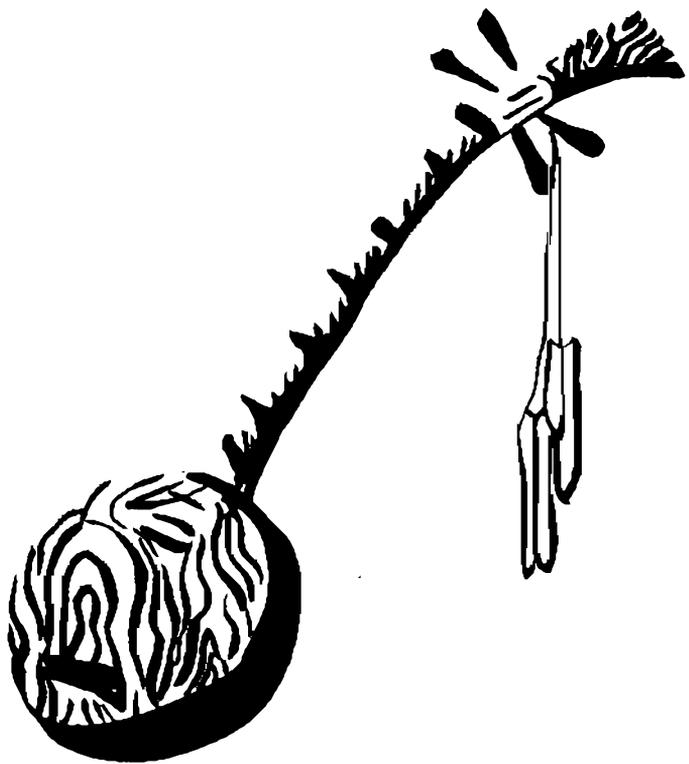
But hardly had she come,
when came a servant, who explained
her parents were detained:
the party was not ended yet
Kieu hurried off to let
the curtain down across her door
and then, fast as before,
she scurried through the garden's gloom.
The path was dark, the moon
had touched the branches' tips with 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 hòè,
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,
Vi 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,
Đinh ninh hai mặt một lời song song.
Tóc tơ căn vặn tấc 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 chãng?"
Nàng rằng: "Hồng diệp xích thằng,
"Một lời cũng đã tiếng rằng tương tri.
"Đùng 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?

Kè 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,
"Hoa 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 dường đã xiêu xiêu,
Xem trong âu yếm có chiều là lời.
Thưa rằng: "Đừng lấy làm chơi,
"Rẽ cho thua hết một lời đã nao!
"Về chi một đóa yêu dào,
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 trâm năm, nữ bỏ đi một ngày!
"Ngấm duyên kỳ ngộ xưa nay,
"Lừa dối ai lại đẹp tày Thôi Trùng.
"Mây mưa đánh đổ đá vàng,
"Quá chiều nên đã chán chường yến 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 dằm thắm ra duyên bẽ bàng.
"Gieo thoi, trước chẳng giữ giàng,
"Để sau nên thẹn cùng chàng bởi ai?
"Vội chi liễu ép hoa nài.
"Còn thàn ắt lại dền bồi có khi!"
Thấy lời đoan chính dễ 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 ngăn 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 thán tha hương để huê.
Lieu-dương cách trở sơn khê,
Xuân đường kịp 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:
"Sự 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 rói bời bời,
Ngập ngừng, nàng mới giải lời trước sau:
"Ông tở 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 tở!
"Quản bao tháng đợi năm chờ,
"Nghĩ người ăn gió nằm mưa xót thềm.
"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 trân trọng châu sa mấy hàng.
Bước yèn quấy gánh vội vàng,
Mối sầu sẻ nửa bước đường chia hai.
Buồn trông phong cảnh quê người,
Đầu cành quỳn nhật cuối trời nhận thưa
Não người, cũ gió tuàn 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 mối tơ.
Trông chừng khói ngát song thưa,
Hoa trôi giạt thắm liễu xơ xác vàng.
Tàn ngàn đạo 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 nách 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 tế nhuyễn của riêng tây,
Sạch sành sanh vét cho đầy túi tham.
Điều đâu bay buộc ai làm?
Này ai đan giậm giật giàm bỗng dung?
Hỏi ra sau mới biết rằng:
Phải tên xưng xuất là thằng bán tở.
Một nhà hoàng hốt ngẩn ngơ,
Tiếng oan dậy đất án ngờ lừa máy.
Hạ từ van lạy suốt ngày,
Điếc tai làn tuất phũ tay tời 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,
Đầu 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 were 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 tiếp bán mình chuộc cha!"
Họ Chung có kể lại già,
Cũng trong nha dịch lại là từ tâm.
Thấy nàng hiếu trọng tình thâm,
Vì nàng, nghĩ cũng thương thăm xót vay.
Tính bài lót đó luồn đây,
Có ba trăm lạng việc này mới xuôi.
Hãy về tạm phó giam ngoài,
Dẫn 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.*

Dau lòng tử biệt sinh ly,
Thân còn chẳng tiếc, tiếc gì đến duyên!
Hạt mưa sá nghĩ phận hèn,
Liệu đem tác cỏ 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 sỗ sàng,
Buồng trong mối dā giục nàng kíp ra.
Nói mình thêm tức nổi nhà,
Thềm 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

Đản do cân sắc cân tài,
Ép cung cầm nguyệt thủ bài quạt thơ.
Mãn nòng một vẻ một ưa,
Bằng lòng khách mới tùy cơ dặt 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 dáng 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 dầu tường vôi.
Vội vàng kẻ giữ người coi,
Nhỏ to, nằng 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:*

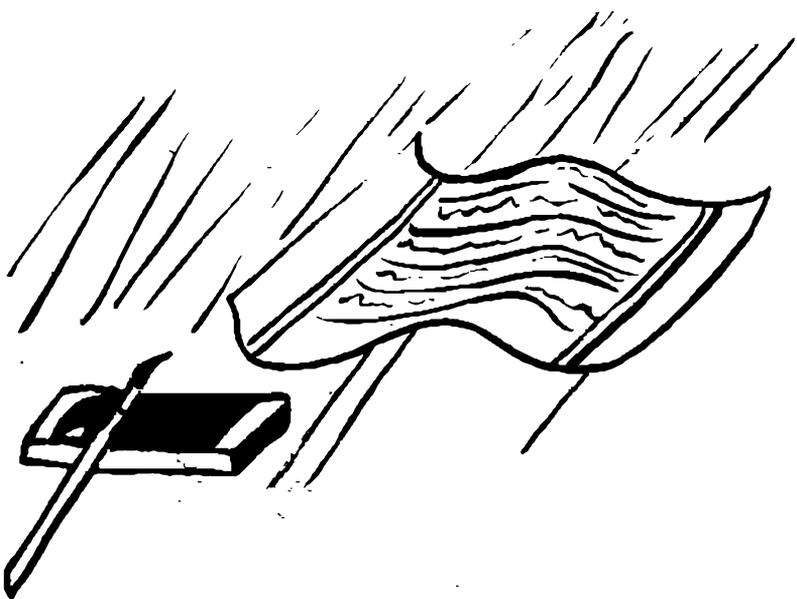


*"Charm's but a worthless thing"
she whispered, "but you brought me here
in this world Father dear
and nourished me when I was small;
and yet nothing at all
have I performed to pay this debt.
Because I can't forget
what Ti-Ying did I feel ashamed;
and am I to be blamed
because I cannot do as well
as 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*

"Về 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 đó 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 ngấn 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 cần 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,
Lẽ 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 khăng 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!"
Nồi 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 dầu bể đa đoan,
"Một nhà để chị riêng oan một mình.
"Cớ chi ngồi nhẫn tàn canh,
"Nồi riêng còn mắc mối tình chi đây?"
Rằng: "Lòng dương 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,
"Rẫy xin chén nước cho người thác oan.
"Bây giờ trâm gãy gương tan,
"Kể làm sao xiết muôn vàn ái ân!
"Trăm nghìn gửi lạy 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 tập 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 rỉ tai:
"Chiếc thoa này với tờ bời 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,
"Dầu mòn bia đá dám sai tắc vàng!"
Lạy 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,
"Đãu rằng xương trắng què 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 thàm sàu!
Khắc canh đã giục nam lâu mấy hồi
Kiệu hoa đâu đã đến ngoài
Quản huyền đâu đã giục người sinh ly.
Đau lòng kẻ ở người đi,
Lệ rơi thấm đá tơ chia rũ 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 dầm dề cành 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 đời phen:
"Phẩm tiên rơi đến tay hèn,
"Hoài công nắng 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 wrapped 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 sấn có con dao,
Giấu cầm nòng 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 man 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 hời đen,
Quen mời lại kiếm ăn miền nguyệt hoa.
Lầu xanh có mẹ Tú bà,
Làng chơi đã trở về già hết duyên.
Tình cờ chẳng hẹn mà nên,
Mặt của muớp đấng, đôi bên một phường.
Chung lưng mở một ngôi hàng,
Quanh năm buôn bán bán hương đã lành.
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 hẳn nghìn vàng chẳng ngoa!
"Về đây nước trước bể hoa,
"Vương tôn quý khách ắt là đua nhau.
"Hẳn ba trăm lạng kém đâu,
"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 quý 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 dầu 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.*



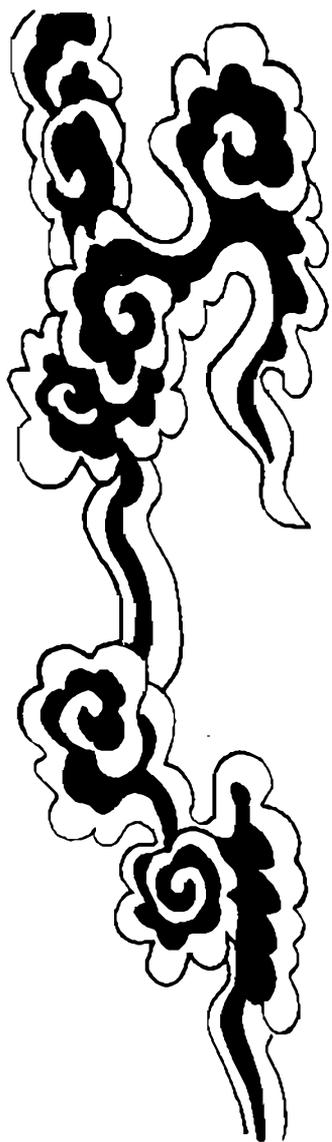
*The cock crows from outside
shrilled forth so loud they seemed to call
right through the solid wall;
the sounding of the watchtower horn
still echoed in the dawn,
when Ma-Giam-Sinh was heard outside
insisting that his bride
make herself ready to depart
Kieu left with heavy heart.
For ten miles of uneven 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 gặp ghềnh.
Bề ngoài mười dặm trường đình,
Vương ông mở tiệc tiễn hành đưa theo.
Ngoài thì chủ khách dập dìu,
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 dào,
"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 bọm 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 lữ 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,
"Sóng 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, woebegone,
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.*

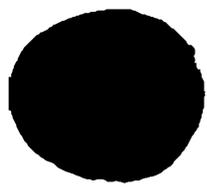
*You are mature and strong,
sir, like a pine tree of bamboo;
protect from snow and dew
this mistletoe beneath your boughs!*

*"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 nằn nì 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 tùng quân,
"Tuyết sương che chở cho thân cát dăng".
Cạn lời, khách mới thưa rằng:
"Bước chân thôi cũng xích thẳng nhiệm trao.
"Mai sau dầu đến thế nào,
"Kìa gương nhật nguyệt nọ dao quý thần!"
Đùng đùng gió giục mây vờn,
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 dăm 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 tám lòng thàn 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 nhờn nhợt màu da,
Ăn gì cao lớn dầy 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 vĩa có thua mối hàng,
Cởi xiêm trút áo số sàng,
Trước thần sẽ nguyện mảnh hương làm dầm.
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 ngỡ ngẩn biết gì,
Cứ lời lạy xuống mặt 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 vẫn lá thơ bời,
"Đưa người cửa trước rước người cửa sau!"
Lạ tai nghe chưa biết đâu,
Xem tình ra cũng những màu dỏ dang.
Lễ xong hương hỏa gia đường,
Tú bà vắt tóc lên giường ngồi ngay.
Dạy rằng: con lạy mẹ đây,
"Lạy rồi sang lạy cậu mà bên kia".
Nàng rằng: "Phải bước lưu ly,
"Phận hèn vàng đã cam bề tiểu tình.
"Điều đâu lấy yến làm anh,
"Ngay 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 khư chung chạ lại khi đứng ngồi.
"Giờ ra thay bạc 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 quá nhiên,
"Thôi dà cướp sống chồng mình 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 vãng 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 fowler 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 dứt dầy!
"Thần này đã bỏ những ngày ra đi!
"Thôi thì thôi có tiếc gì!"
Sân dao tay áo tức thì giờ ra.
Sợ gan nát ngọc liềm hoa,
Mụ còn trông mặt nàng đã quá tay.
Thương ôi, tài sắc bạc này,
Một dao 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 chòn 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 dở 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 and 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,
"Hoa xuân dương nhụy ngày xuân còn dài.
"Cũng là lẽ một làm hai,
"Đá vàng sao nữ ép nài mưa mây.
"Lỡ chân trượt dũ vào đây,
"Khoá buồng xuân để đợi ngày đào non.
Người còn thì của 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 nần nì,
Nàng nghe dường cũng thị phi rạch ròi.
Vả trong thân mộng mấy lời,
Túc nhân âu cũng có trời ở trong.
Kiếp này nợ trả chưa xong,
Làm chi thêm một nợ chồng kiếp sau!
Lặng nghe ngấm 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 chàng!
"Sợ khi ong bướm dãi dăng.
"Đến điều sống đục sao bằng thác trong!"
Mụ rằng. "Con hãy thông dong.
"Phải điều lòng lại đổi 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, nòng 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 tím trắng 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.*

*

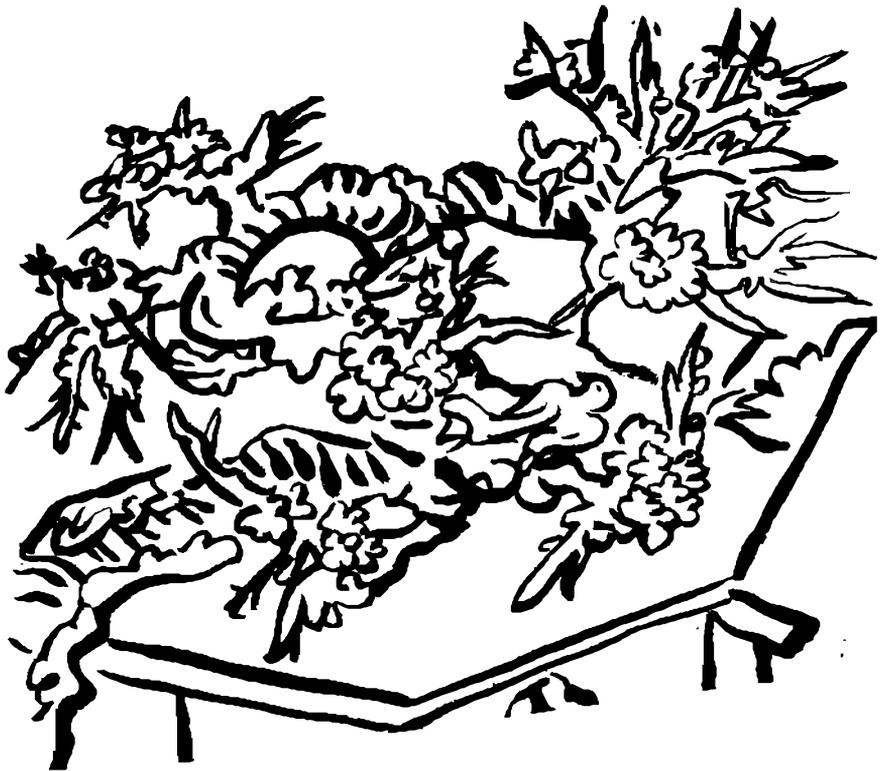
*Chung quanh những nước non người,
Đau lòng lưu lạc nên vài bốn câu.*

*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 rí bút rềm châu.
Cách tường nghe có tiếng dàu họa vờn.
Một chàng vừa trạc thanh xuân.
Hình dung chầu chuốt áo khăn dụ dàng.
Nghĩ rằng cũng mạch thư lương.
Hỏi ra mới biết rằng chàng Sở Khanh
Bóng nga thấp thoáng dưới màn.
Trong nòng, chàng cũng ra tình đeo dàu:
"Than ôi! sắc nước hương trời,
Tức cho dàu bông lạc loài đến đây?
"Giá dành trong nguyệt trên mây,
"Hoa sao hoa khéo dọa đầy bấy hoa?
"Tức gan riêng giận trời giừ,
"Lòng này ai tỏ cho tu, hỡi lòng?
"Thuyền quền ví biết anh hùng,
"Ra tay tháo cũi sỏ lồng như chơi!"

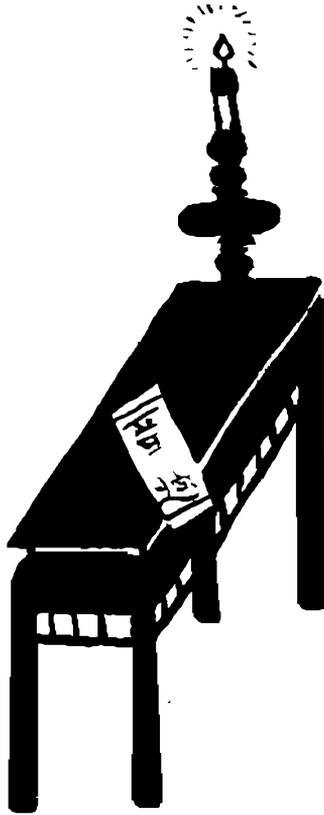
*O lovely work of art,
bravely I'd break the bars of brass
that cage you here, alas,
if I your freedom could restore".*



*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 danh.
Nghĩ người thôi lại nghĩ mình,
Cầm lòng chưa xối lại tình bơ vơ.
Những là làn 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,
Liện hồng nàng mới nhấn lời gởi sang.
Trời tấy lãng đăng bóng vàng,
Phục thư đã thấy tin chàng đến nơi.
Mở xem một bức tiền 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:*

Chim hòm thoi thót về rừng,
Đóa trà mi đã ngậm gương nửa vành.
Tường đồng lay động bóng cành,
Rẽ song đã thấy Sở Khanh lên vào.
Sượng sùng đánh đập ra chào,
Lạy thôi nàng mới vì 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 cỏ ngậm vành về sau!"
Lặng nghe lẩm nhẩm gật đầu.
"Ta đây nào phải ai dàu mà rằng!
"Nàng đã biết đến ta chăng,
"Bể trâm 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.*

"Thìra 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 gì được thân.
Cũng liêu nhắm mắt đưa chân,
Mà xem con tào xoay vắn 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 lâu 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 dãy hàng.
Nàng càng thốn thức gan vàng.
Sở Khanh đã rẽ dây cương lối nào!
Một mình khôn biết làm sao,
Dậm rừng bước thấp bước cao hỡi hùng.
Hóa nhi thật có nữ lòng,
Àm chi giầy tía vò hồng lấm nau!

*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 dầu xuống đất cánh dầu 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 để dầu?"
"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 nhật 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 lặn 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' streachery
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 tiếng rêu rao,
Rằng: "Nghe mới có con nào ở đây,
"Phao cho quyền gó rú 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 rấp thị hùng ra tay.
Nàng rằng: "Trời nhé có hay!
"Quyến anh rú yến sự này tại ai?"
"Đem người đẩy xuống giếng khơi,
"Nói rồi, rồi lại ăn lời được ngay!
"Còn tiền tích viết ở tay,
"Rõ ràng mặt ấy mặt này chứ 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!*

. Bường 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 bù 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 thói!"
Mụ rằng: "Ai cũng như ai,
"Người ta ai mất tiền hoài đến đây?
"Ở trong còn lắm điều hay.
"Nồi dèm khép 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 đầu vàng 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,
Đấu 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 lơ,
Cuộc say đầy thánng trận cười suốt đêm.
Dập diu 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 gương kẻ 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 rối chẳng dần mà đau!
Nhớ ơn chín chữ cao sâu,
Một ngày một ngã bóng dầu tà tà.
Dặm nghìn nước thấm non xa,
Nghĩ dầu 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 chuyén tay!
Tình sâu mong trả nghĩa dày,
Hoa kia đã chấp cành này chỗ chưa?
Mối tình đời đoạn vô tở,
Giấc hương quan lóang lờn mơ canh 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 đời 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 đèn hương khuê gởi vào.
Trướng 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 nã nùng,
Đêm xuân ai dễ cầm lòng được chững!
Lạ gì thanh khí lễ hàng,
Một dây một buộc ai giàng cho ra?
Sớm đào tối mặt lán la,
Trước còn trăng 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 cầu 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 dấu tình.
Lạ cho cái sóng 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 loè dâm bông.
Buồng the phải buổi thong dong,
Thang lan rủ bức trướng hồng tím hoa
Rõ màu trong ngọc trắng ngà,
Dày dầy sẵn đúc một tòa thêu nhện,
Sinh càng tỏ nét càng khôn,
Ngụ tình tay tháo một thiên lụa 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 diên ngang ngang
"Lòng còn gởi áng mây Hàng,
"Họa vắn, xin hãy chịu chàng hôm nay".
Rằng: "Sao nói lạ lùng thay!
"Cành kia chẳng phải cõi này mà ra?"
Nàng càng ủ 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 dâu.
"Bình-khang nấn ná 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
"Vé 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 hay" sự từ gói người dăng 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 dáng đại hình,
"Đành thân phận thiệp 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 Ngô 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
realy 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 đem ngăn tình dài,
Ngoài hiên thỏ dā 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 thiệp 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 đượm lửa càng nồng,
Càng sôi vẻ ngọc càng lỏng 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 cành biếc đã chen lá vàng
Giàu thu vừa nảy giờ sương,
Gò yên đã thấy xuân đường đến nơi
Phong lời nói trợn bờ bờ,
Nặng lòng e áp tỉnh bởi phân chia.
Quyết ngay biện bạch một bề.
Dạy cho má phấn lại về lâu xanh!
Thấy lời nghiêm huan rành rành,
Đánh liều, sinh mới lấy tình này kêu
Rằng "Con biết tội đã nhiều,
"Đầu răng sam sét búa rìu cũng cam
"Trót vì tay đã nhúng chàm,
"Đại rồi còn biết khôn làm sao dãi!
"Cùng nhau va tiếng một ngày
"Ôm cầm ai nõ 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 dùm dùm,
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 hương thừa,
"Mượn màu sơn 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 phó 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 chấp lại một cành mẫu đơn.
Phận dành chi dám kêu oan,
Đào hoen quện má liễu tan tác mày.
Một sân lấm cát đã đầy,
Gương lờ 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,
"Đẻ ai trăng tủi hoa sầu vì ai?"
Phủ đường nghe thoáng 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 hôn:
"Nàng đã tính hết xa gần,
"Từ xưa nàng đã biết thân 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 uy mới dạy cho bài giai vị
Rằng "Nhu hãm có thế thì.
"Trăng hoa song cũng thị phi biết điều"
Sinh rằng "Chút phận bọt bèo,
"Theo đời va cũng ít nhiều bút nghiên"
Cười rằng: "Đã thế thì nên.
"Mộc già, hãy thử một thiên trình nghe"
Nàng vang cái bút tay đề,
Tiên hoa trình trước án phê xem tường
Khen rằng: "Giá đáng Thịnh Đường.
"Tàu này sắc ấy nghìn vàng chưa còn"
"Thực là tài tử giai nhân,
"Chân Trần còn có Châu Trần nào hơn!
"Thôi đừng rước dữ cầu hôn,
"Làm chi lỗ nhịp 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 diễm sao.
Bày 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.
Huệ lan sực nức một nhà,
Tìm 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 lại tình tao khang.
"Nghĩ ra thật cũng nên đường,
"Tâm 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.
"Dễ dò rón bề 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 chăng 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 lãn mai lữa 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 gửi 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 giường 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 nói sòng 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 chày cũng chẳng đi đâu mà chày.
"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 gói 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 Đẳng 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
winthin 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 trên 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 đặn lòng,
Sinh đà về đến lâu 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?
Nhưng là e ấp dùng dằng,
Rút dây sợ nữa động rình 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 thủng 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 dĩa rụng một vài lá ngô.
Chạnh niềm nhớ cảnh giang hồ,
Một màu quan tái mấy mùa gió trăng.
Tình riêng chưa dám rỉ răng,
Tiểu thư trước đã liệu chừng nhủ qua:
"Cách năm mây bạc xa xa,
"Làm-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 ghe hờn ghen,
"Xấu chàng mà có ai khen chi mình!
"Váy nện ngành mặt làm thình,
"Miau cao vốn đã rập ranh những ngày.
"Lâm-Tri đường bộ thánng 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 Ưng, lại chọn một bầy côn quang.
Dặn 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 xế ngang dàu,
Biết dàu ấm lạnh biết dàu 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 vương 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 đài,
Nổi lòng khấn chứa cạn lời vân vân...

*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 fires 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 dật lữ ác nhân,
Ầm ầm khóc quý kinh thần mọc ra!
Đầy sân gương tuốt sáng lòe,
Thất kinh nàng chưa biết là làm sao.
Thuốc mê đầu đã tưới 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,
Dem vào để đó lộn sông ai hay?
Tôi đời 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

Thúc 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 đầu!
Hớt hơ hớt hải 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 thối lại có bàn rằng ai!
Thúc 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 rắp thăm 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 dấu thì cũng biết tin: rõ ràng.
Sấm sanh lẽ vật rước sang,
Xin tìm cho thấy mặt nàng hỏi han.
Đạo nhà: phục trước tĩn đàn,
Xuất thần dây phú: 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 đẽ 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 blown
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 cõi trần?
Tiếc hoa nhũng ngậm ngùi xuân,
Thân này để lại mấy lần gặp tiên!*

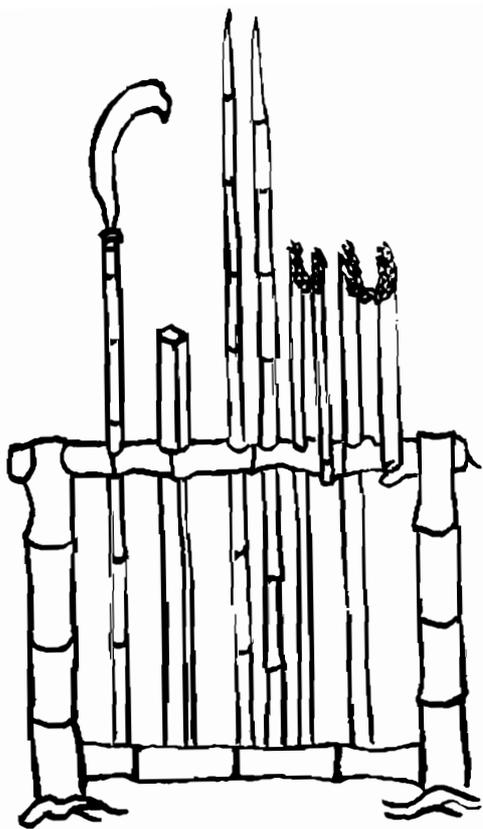
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*Nước trời hoa rụng đã yên,
Hay dầu địa ngục ở miền nhân gian!*

*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 chùng 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 thiệp giấc nồng chưa phai.
Hoàng lương chợt tỉnh hồn mai,
Cửa nhà đau máu lâu dài nào đây?
Bàng hoàng đỡ tỉnh đỡ say,
Sảnh đường mảng tiếng đòi ngay lên hầu.
Ả hoàn trên dưới giục mau,
Hai hùng 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 báo 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 hỏi ngành tra,
Sực mình, nâng phải cứ mà gọi thưa.
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 mè o 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!"
Á hoàn trên dưới dạ rân,
Dẫu rằng trăm miệng khôn phân lẽ nào!
Trúc cón ra sức đập vào,
Thịt nào chẳng nát gan nào chẳng kinh!
Xót thay dào 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 lữ 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 mục nào,
Thấy người thấy nét ra vào mà thương,
Khi chèn 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 nương 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 lầu 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 dường cũng bớt vài bốn phân.
Cửa người dày đọa 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 yên bay,
Phòng không thương kẻ tháng ngày chiếc thân.
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 cảnh 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,
"Thời thời đã mắc vào vành chẳng sai!
"Chước dâu có chước lạ đời,
"Người dâu mà lại có người tình ma!
"Rõ ràng thật lừa dối 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 tằm đòi đoạn như tơ rối bời.
Sợ uy dám 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 đem 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 ngậy,
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 nô đủ mọi tài,
"Bàn đàn thử dạo một bài chàng nghe!"
Nàng đà tán hoán tề mê,
Váng lời ra trước bình the vắn đàn:
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 thăm!
Giọt châu lã chã khôn cầm,
Cúi đầu chàng những gạt thăm 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 rờng 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 dầy,
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 thúy 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 quyên,
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 dè tình hỏi tra.
Lựa lời nàng mới thưa qua:
"Phải khi mình lại xót xa nỗi mình".
Tiểu thư lại hỏi Thúc sinh:
"Cây 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,
Thần cung nàng mới thảo qua một tờ.
Diện tiền trình với tiểu thư,
Thoắt xem đường có ngăn ngõ 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 tràn chìm nổi thuyền duyên.
"Hữu tài thương nổi vô duyên lạ đời!"
Sinh rằng: "Thật có như lời,
"Hồng 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 lẽ 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 lớp 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 trắng 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 nhất lưới mau,
Nói lời trước mặt roi châu vắng người.
Gác kinh viện sách đôi nơi,
Trong gang tấc lại gặp 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!
"Tháp 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.
"Quần chi lên thác xuống ghềnh,
"Cũng toan sống thác với tình cho xong.
Tông đường chút chữa cam lòng,
"Cẩn rằng bẻ một chữ đồng làm hai.
Thẹn mình đá nát vàng phai,
Trăm thân để 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 rũi 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 dầy,
"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 đấy cũng lại càng cực đày.
"Liệu mà xa chạy cao bay,
"Ái ân ta có ngần này mà thôi!
"Bây giờ kẻ ngược người xuôi,
"Biết bao giờ lại nói lời nước non?
"Dẫu rằng sóng cạn đá mòn,
"Con tìm 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 ù 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 vuốt túi đứng ra,
Tiểu thư đầu 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!*

Thiên trà cạn nước hồng mai,
Thong dong nối gót thu trai cùng về.
Nàng càng e lệ ử ê,
Rỉ tai hỏi lại hoa tì trước sau.
Hoa rằng: "Bà đến đã lâu,
"Nhón chân đứng nép độ dâu 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 dâu:
"Đàn bà thế ấy thấy âu một người!
"Ấy mới gan ấy mới tài!
"Nghĩ càng thêm nổi sồn gai rụng rời!
"Người dâu 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!*

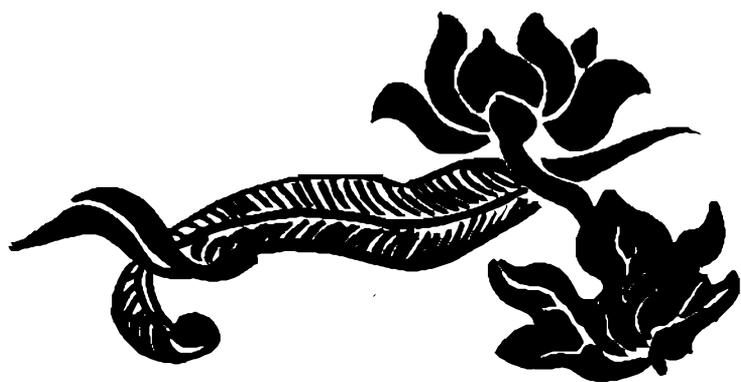
*Did she get angry? No!
She leaves that to the common folk
and treats it as a joke;
no one can guess her inmost thought.*

*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 lâu cũng có ngày bẻ hoa!
"Phận bèo bao quản nước sa,
"Lệnh dènh đâu nữa cũng là lệnh dènh.
"Chín e què 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 sân 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 diêm nguyệt dẫu giày cầu sương.
 Canh khuya thân gái dặm trường,
 Phần e dường 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."*

Gạn gùng ngành ngọn cho tường,
Lạ lòng nàng hãy tìm đường nói quanh :
 "Tiểu thiên 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 vàng diện hiển rành rành,
Chuông vàng khánh bạc bên mình giỡ ra,
 Xem qua sư mới dạy qua :
"Phải ni Hằng Thủy là ta hậu tình.
 "Chín e đường sá một mình,
"Ở 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 thún được chốn am mây,
Muôi đưa 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 thành thời,
Có người đàn việt 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 giầu 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 mới 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 dà 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 nũa đây
"Kíp toan kiếm chốn xe đây,
"Không dung chưa để 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 néo trước lụy mình đến sau".
Nàng càng mặt ủ mày chau,
Càng nghe mụ 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 dặt 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 thoi,
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 lâu 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 phèn,
Mà cho bùn lại vẫn lên mấy lần!
Hồng quân với khách hồng quần,
Đã xoay đến thế còn vòn 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!"
Tù 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 gặt 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 chón thanh nhân,
Đặt giường thái bảo vây màn bát tiên.
Trai anh hùng gái thuyền quyên,
Phí nguyên sánh phượng đẹp duyên cưới 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 dương nồng,
Trượng phu thoát dã động lòng bốn phương.
Trông vời trời bể mệnh mang,
Thanh gươm yên ngựa lên đường thẳng giông.
Nàng rằng: "Phận gái chữ tòng,
"Chàng đi thiếp cũng một lòng xin đi".
Tử 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 tiện dã lia 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 dằng dẵng nhất cài then máy.
Sán rêu chẳng vẽ dấu giày,
Cổ cao hơn thước liễu gầy vài phân.
Đoái trông muôn dặm tử phần,
Hồn què theo ngọn mây Tần xa xa.
Xót thay huyền cỡi 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 lià ngó ý còn vương tơ lòng.
Duyên em dù nói chỉ hồng,
May ra khi đã tay bằng tay mang.
Tác lòng cố quốc tha hương,
Đường kia nổi nọ ngổn ngang bờ bời.
Cánh hồng bay bóng tuyết 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 lóng nhữn̄g âm thầ̄m,
Lửa binh đầ̄u đả̄ ầ̄m ầ̄m một phươ̄ng.
Ngẩ̄t trời sắ̄t khí mơ mằ̄ng,
Đầ̄y sông kinh ngạc chậ̄t đườ̄ng giáp binh.
Người quen thuộ̄c kẻ chung quanh,
Nhũ̄ nàng hầ̄y tạm lánh mình một nơi.
Nàng rằ̄ng: "Trướ̄c đả̄ hẹ̄n lời,
"Đấ̄u trong nguy hiể̄m dắ̄m rời ước xưa!"
Còn dang dù̄ng đắ̄ng ngắ̄n ngờ,
Má̄i ngoà̄i đả̄ thấy bóng cờ tiể̄ng la.
Giáp binh kéo đến quanh nhà,
Đồ̄ng thanh cùng gớ̄i: "Nào là phu nhầ̄n?"
Hai bên mườ̄i vị tướng quầ̄n,
Đặ̄t gườ̄m cớ̄i giáp trướ̄c sắ̄n khắ̄u đầ̄u.
Cung nga thể̄ nữ̄ nố̄i sau,
Rằ̄ng: "Vầ̄ng lậ̄nh chỉ rướ̄c chầ̄u vu quy".
Sắ̄n sằ̄ng phươ̄ng liể̄n loan nghi,
Hoa quan chấ̄p chớ̄i hà y rỡ̄ rằ̄ng.
Dị̄ng cờ nố̄i trố̄ng lên đườ̄ng,
Trúc tồ̄ nố̄i trướ̄c kiệ̄u vằ̄ng 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.*

竹林



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 cần dai,
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 cát được nhờ bóng cây!
"Đến bấy giờ mới thấy dây,
"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 bõ 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 đùng đùng 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 tầm nã bắt về hỏi tra.
Lại sai lệnh tiễn truyền qua,
Giữ giàng họ Thúc một nhà cho yên.
Mụ quân gia vĩ 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 explained 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".*

Thê 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 dứt 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".*



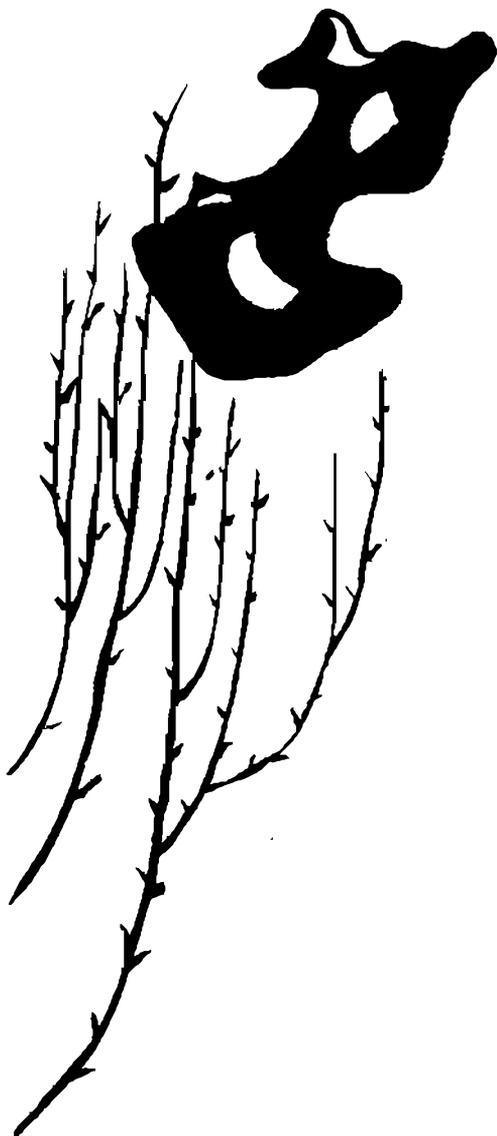
*Kieu sent a swordsman where
young Thuc had been compelled to wait
outside the castle gate,
he came escorted by the guard
and trembling in the yard.
He blushed beneath the soldiers' gaze.
"My debt to you outweighs
a thousand mountains", Kieu began;
"look well and tell me: can
you still remember me; whom 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 gương mời đến Thúc lang,
Mặt như chàm đỏ mình dường dẽ run.
Nàng rằng: "Nghĩa nặng nghìn non,
"Làm Tri người cũ, chàng còn nhớ không?"
"Sám Thương chẳng vẹn chữ tòng.
"Tại ai, há dám phụ lòng cố nhân?"
"Gấm trăm cuốn bạc nghìn cân,
"Tạ lòng dẽ xứng báo ân gọi là.
"Vợ chàng quý quái tình ma,
"Phen này kẻ cấp bà già gặp nhau!
"Kiến bò miệng chén chưa lâu,
"Miau sâu cũng trả nghĩa sâu cho vừa!"
Thúc sinh trông mặt bấy giờ,
Mồ hôi chàng đã như mưa ướt dầm.
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.ⁿ*

*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 nõ 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 ngồi,
"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 chu 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 thua:
"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 tướng tiền 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, lay 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 đóng 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,
Giáo 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 lăm,
"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 rời,
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,
"Tấc riêng như cát gánh đầy đổ đi!
"Chạm xương chếp dạ xiết chi,
"Để đem gan cóc dền 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 đâu 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 muốn dạm 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 tẩy 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 ngôi tan,
Binh uy từ ấy sấm ran trong ngoài.
Triều đình riêng một góc trời,
Gồm hai vãn võ rạch đôi sơn hà.
Đòi cơn gió quét mưa sa,
Huyện thành đập đổ năm tòa cõi nam.
Phong trần mài một lưỡi gươm,
Những loài giá áo túi cơm sá gì!
Nghênh ngang một cõi biên thù,
Kém gì cô quả kém gì bá vương!
Trước cờ ai dám tranh cường,
Năm năm hùng cứ một phương hải tằm.

*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 tổng 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 găm vóc, sai quan thuyết hàng.
Lại riêng một lễ với nàng,
Hai tên thế 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 gậy dựng cơ đồ
Bấy lâu bể Sở sông Ngô tung hoành!
Bỏ thân về với triều đình,
Hàng thần lơ láo phận mình ra đâu?
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 confidingly
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,
Lẽ 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 đời dào,
"Tươi ra đã khắp thấm vào đã sâu.
"Bình thành công đức bấy lâu,
"Ai ai cũng đội trên đầu biết bao.
"Ngắm 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,
Ngọn cờ ngợ gác trông canh trẻ 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 dầy 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 đời.
Quan quân truy sát đuổi dài,
Ừ ừ sát khí ngát trời ai đang!
Trong hào ngoài lũy tan hoang,
Loạn quân vừa dất tay nàng đến nơi.
Trong vòng tên đá bời bời,
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 cơ 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;
 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 thắp cao sự lòng.
Rằng: "Từ là đấng anh hùng,
"Đọc 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,
"Dán mình di 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 lạy 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 quân mở tiệc hạ công.
Xôn xao tơ 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 vượn hót nào tà,
Lọt tai, Hồ cũng nhận 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 dấm ngấm 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 mett 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 werè 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 dào,
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,
Tám 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 nhũng 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 sấm bức tiên hoa,
Một thiên tuyết bút gọi là để sau.
Cửa bồng vợi 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 dà dăm ngọc chìm hương máu rôi!
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 nàng:
"Nàng sao hiểu nghĩa đủ đường,
"Kiếp sao rặt những đoạn trường thế thói?"
Su 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 gương trần,
"Kẻ rãng hùm sói gởi thân tôi đòi.
"Giữa dòng nước dấy 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 nhé, 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 chụm 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 chuyến vắn!*

*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 lưới mướt áo là,
Tuy dầm hơi nước chưa lòa bóng gương.
Giác Duyên nhận thật mặt nàng,
Nàng còn thêm thiệp giác vàng chưa phai.
Mơ màng phách quế hồn mai,
Đạm Tiên, thoát đã thấy người ngày xưa.
Rằng: "Tôi đã có lòng chờ,
"Máu 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 hương thụ về lâu,
"Duyên xưa tròn trặn phúc sau đời 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
within 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 mênh mông,
Triều dâng hôm sớm mây hồng trước sau.
Nạn xưa trút sạch lâu lâu,
Duyên xưa chưa để 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 miss 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 dậm 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 lẫn hời.
Điều đâu sét đánh lưng trời,
Thoắt nghe, chàng thoát rặng 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.
Đốt 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 nổi dạn 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 bẩy 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 dưa.
Vật mình vấy gió tuôn mưa,
Dầm dề giọt ngọc thần thờ hồn mai!
Đau đòi đoạn ngắt đòi thôi,
Tỉnh 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 khô 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 bè.
"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 đàng,
"Còn tôi, tôi một gập nàng mới thôi!"
Nỗi thương nói chẳng hết lời,
Tạ từ sinh mới sụi 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 chằm 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 mộng 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 Vân 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 thư phòng,
Đốt lò hương giờ phím đồng ngày xưa.
Bế bài, rầu rĩ tiếng tơ,
Trầm bay nhạt khói gió đưa lay rèm.
Dường 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 ngô 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.*

*Vâng 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 thua lên:
"Sự này đã ngoài 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 Bac;
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 ẻ 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, nằng phải trốn ra,
"Chẳng may lại gặp một nhà Bạc kia
 "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 mỗi 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 lưu ly,
"Trong quân tôi hỏi thiếu gì tóc tơ.
"Đại vương tên Hải họ Tì,
"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 lời muôn vàn,
Mảnh hương còn đó phím đàn còn dây.
Đàn cầm khéo gắn ngọc 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 chim 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 binh,
"Thất cơ, Từ dã thu linh trận tiền.
"Nàng Kiều công cá chẳng dên,
"Lệnh quan lại bắt ép duyên thố từ.
"Nàng đà gieo ngọc trầm châu,
"Sông Tiền dường đó, ấy mờ 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 thâm 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 bỗng 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 bỗng làm ma khóc người?"
Nghe tin ngỡ gác rụng rời,
Xúm quanh kể lẽ rợn lời hỏi tra:
"Này chồng này mẹ này cha,
"Này là em ruột này là em dâu.
"Thật tin nghe đã bấy lâu,
"Pháp sư dạy thờ. sự đau lạ đương!"
Sư rằng: "Nhan quá 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 lià rừng,
Thăm tìm luống những liêu 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 true love 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 hỹ hồ nghi nửa phần.
Quanh co theo dải giang tân,
Khởi 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 đờn đòu:

*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 lau lác quê người,
"Bèo trôi sóng vỗ chốc mười lăm năm!
"Tính rằng sông nước cát làm,
"Kiếp này, ai lại còn cầm gậy!"*

*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 dẫu!
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 già tức thì,
Vương ông dạy rước cùng về một nơi.
Nàng rằng: "Chút phận hou rơi,
"Nửa đời ném 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 nhát 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.*

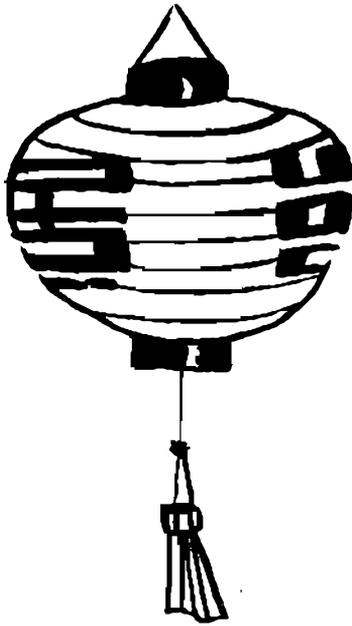
*There always was a bud
of dormant hope within my heart,
the years we were apart.*

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,
"Vây 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 thiêng lửa lọc đã đành 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 dãi gió dầm mưa đã nhiều.
"Nói càng hổ thẹn trăm chiều.
"Thà cho ngọn nước thùy 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!
"Dẫu 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 dụi 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 dơ 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
Kien'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 bài 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 nổi đêm chày trăng 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 dà mặt dạn mày dầy khó coi!
"Những như âu yếm vành ngoài,
"Còn toan mở mặt với người cho qua?
"Lại như những thói người ta,
"Vớt hương dưới đất bẻ hoa cuối mùa.
"Khéo là giờ nhuộm bày trò,
"Còn tình đâu nữa là thử dấy 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 cừu chị đây!
"Chữ trình còn một chút này,
"Chẳng cần cho vũng 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 vành ái ân.
"Gương trong chẳng chút bụi trần
"Một lời quyết hẳn muôn phần kính vâng!
"Bấy lâu dấy 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 đức 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!
"Chớ che dùm bọc thiếu gì?
"Trăm năm danh tiết cũng vì đêm nay!"*

*Hand clasping sweet hand tight
each thought the other wise und 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.*

Thoát thôi tay lại cầm tay,
Càng yêu vì nét càng say vì tình.
Thêm nến 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 rặng: "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 dằm 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 sầu thảm nay sao vui vầy?
"Tẻ vui bởi tại lòng này,
"Hay là khổ tận đến ngày cam lai?"
Nàng rằng: "Vi 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 mặn 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.*

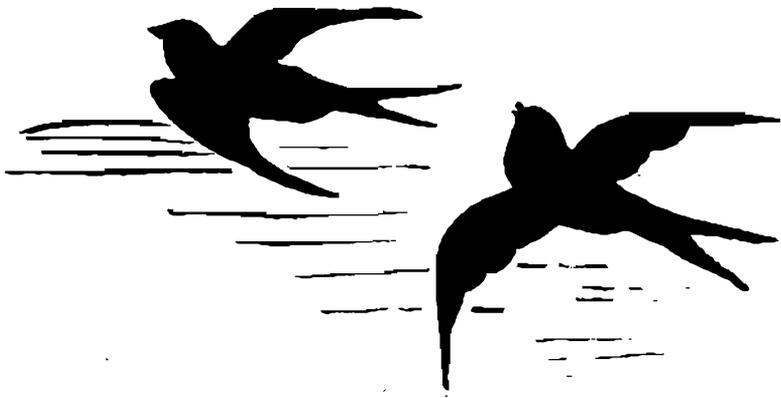
*Their duties done so soon
they both were opportunely now
linked by their marriage vow
and by strong friendship's powerful chain.*

*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 chơn gối cũng ngoài cầm thơ.
Khi chén rượu khi cuộc cờ.
Khi xem hoa nở khi chờ trăng lên.
Ba sinh đã phi 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 trùm kẽ ngạch cỏ lên mái nhà.
Sư đà hái thuốc phương xa,
Mây bay hạc lánh biển 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 dằng dặc quan giai lần lần.
Thừa gia chẳng hết nòng 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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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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