



*Traces of
Previous Lives*

THE SUPREME MASTER CHING HAI

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THE SUPREME MASTER CHING HAI
(Wearing Vegan Fur)

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Biography of The Supreme Master Ching Hai

The Supreme Master Ching Hai was born in Central Au Lac (Vietnam). At the age of eighteen, Master Ching Hai moved to England to study, and then later to France and then Germany, where She worked for the Red Cross and married a German physician. After two years of happy marriage, with Her husband's blessings, She left Her marriage in pursuit of enlightenment, thus fulfilling an ideal that had been with Her since Her childhood. This began a time of arduous pilgrimages to many different countries that ended only when She met a perfect living Master in the Himalayas. Master Ching Hai received the divine transmission of the inner Light and Sound, which She later called the Quan Yin Method. After a period of diligent practice, She attained Perfect Enlightenment.

To satisfy the longing of sincere Truth seekers, the Supreme Master Ching Hai offers the Quan Yin Method of meditation to people of all nationalities, religions and cultural backgrounds. Her message of love and peace brings spiritual liberation and hope to people throughout the world, reminding all to uphold Truth, Virtue, and Beauty in life.

Apart from setting a noble example, Supreme Master Ching Hai also encourages others to beautify the world through inspired creativity. Expressing Her inner joy through diverse media such as painting, poetry, jewelry and clothing designs, and musical compositions, Master Ching Hai seeks to enhance the outer as well as the inner beauty of all people with whom She comes in contact. Her artistic creations, displayed in exhibitions throughout the world, remind us of the inner spiritual realms. Her poems have served as a source of inspiration for many renowned composers, who have adapted the poems to music and performed the compositions to worldwide acclaim.

At a banquet honoring The Supreme Master Ching Hai in 1993, Mayor Frank F. Fasi of Honolulu, Hawaii, proclaimed: "The Supreme Master Ching Hai brings love to places around the world still plagued with hatred. She brings hope where there is despair, and She brings understanding where there is misunderstanding. She is the light of a great person, an angel of mercy for all of us."

Foreword

Traces of Previous Lives recalls a time in the life of Supreme Master Ching Hai, a time filled with youthful love as well as a time that Her motherland was engaged in war. This collection of poems reflects that period of Her life in their expression of the sweet pain of romantic love as well as the suffering created by war. But even more than that, the Author's deep spiritual insight and compassion give every poem an uplifting quality.

The poems in the first part of the book reminisce about love. That first awakening of feelings for another besides one's parents is the most golden time in a person's life, and the memories never depart. To the Poet, the offering of this love is always innocent, pure and completely devoted. Such love is expressed freely, without a thought for its return:

*Last night,
I had a beautiful dream.
I heard footsteps
And your sweet voice, humming!*
(From "Dream")

Even the painful 'thorns' of love are part of its wondrous experience:

*Love is a blushing rose blossoming
Gorgeous, radiant, but piercing!*
(From "Love Is...")

No matter what the age of the reader, one is still transported to the world of exquisite yearning and bedazzled delight when experiencing through the Author's eyes:

*You have come, and I feel youthful once more,
Like a twinkling star in this magnificent universe.*
(From "Beside You")

But beyond the beauty of romantic love, these poems also speak to its underlying power. Love is the most motivating force in life; it brings new hope and softens the soul. Without love, life has no meaning. With love, any difficulty or obstruction can be overcome. And so it is that the personal love described so eloquently in *Traces of Previous Lives* is also a beacon, illuminating the heart's way to the more elevated love of compassion and selflessness.

The poems in the second part of *Traces of Previous Lives* reveal the suffering and separation caused by war. However, while deploring its tragedies, the Author praises the dedication and faithful loyalty of those who love and serve their country.

*Hats off to honor such spirit of devotion,
Although in exile, you still display patriotic allegiance.*

(From "To Vinh Liem")

One who can endure hardship to protect and keep peace in one's country for the benefit of all must have an elevated soul. But so too, does the one who forsakes personal comfort to stand with others and uphold the noble principle of non-violence toward one's fellow beings.

*Together we march under the open sky,
Despising tyranny, filled with sorrow for our motherland...*

(From "In Anguish over the Loss of One's Country")


Finally, it can be said that each poem in *Traces of Previous Lives* is an opportunity for an awakening. A poem of romantic love may stir the soul to realize its thirst for the highest true love, which is the universal love for all beings. A poem of war may cause the painful longing for true peace, which is the peace that comes from within. These awakenings are glimpses into the ideal world, and to aspire for this world means to embark on the greatest journey of all: the spiritual journey.

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* Originally in Aulacese – Translated by the Author

** Originally in Aulacese – Translated by The SMCHIA Book Department

Reflections on Supreme Master Ching Hai's Poetry

By Poet Phung Minh Tien

(Originally in Aulacese)

Writing poems is difficult; writing elegant poetry is even more difficult. Writing elegant poetry and at the same time conveying noble feelings, profound thoughts, a distant past, a tumultuous present, and a blissful future, is indeed infinitely more challenging.

Fortunately, in this century, we have been blessed with the marvelous union between talent and enlightenment in the poetry of Supreme Master Ching Hai. Her poems, assembled in such collections as *Wu Tzu Poems*, *Traces of Previous Lives*, *The Dream of a Butterfly*, *The Lost Memories*, and *The Old Time*, were composed on Her path to Self-discovery as She searched for the Truth. Through Her exaltation of the God Nature in all sentient beings, an immense world of liberation has been opened. She encourages humanity to break through binding attachments, earthly body's limitations and preconceived ignorance, so that the Self may soar to glorious realms.

The Poet has been described modestly as follows:

“Supreme Master Ching Hai was born in Au Lac. As a young adult, She went abroad to study. Later, She traveled to many countries and famous holy sites in search of the Truth. After a time of seclusion and practice in the Himalayas, She attained enlightenment.

At present, with infinite compassion, Supreme Master Ching Hai teaches the Quan Yin Method to sincere Truth-seekers.”

The Poet came of age in a war-torn country, where family love, romantic love, and even patriotic love had to be forsaken:

*My child, just follow the others;
I can neither laugh nor cry at this moment!*

Every leave-taking is filled with sadness, because a safe and joyful place has to be abandoned for a seemingly vast and stormy unfamiliar world:

*You've gone to the end of the horizon,
The world is vast, who knows if a return is ever to come?
In the heart of a stormy ocean,
I wonder what the tiny sea shell longs for?*

“A Farewell to My Child”
From *Traces of Previous Lives*

In such immensity, human beings feel more than ever, that their insignificant and humble fate is overburdened with trials and tribulations, bound by so much yearning, hope, sorrow and separation:

*Who has stopped here long ago, then took off
To thousands of stations, and hundreds of waters?...
I'm so young and growing with hopes,
Day after day, the foolish widow.*

*Will you return, or never come back?
Am I forgotten? Or should I stop yearning?
I wish to follow you on thousands of strange roads,
Like silky moonlight – never ceases shining!...*

“Love Melody 2”
From *The Lost Memories*

Displaced in a discontented world, She witnessed life's many vicissitudes: its faint hopes and desperate pursuits, awakened mornings and evanescent evenings. The more a person struggles, the more he or she is surrounded by futile obsessions and shattered dreams. All these troubles besiege the human fate, such that reveries turn into nightmares, and hope vanishes into thin air:

*There were days when tomorrow didn't want to arrive
Wearily I waited throughout the night!
My soul's lost in an endless nightmare,
So much struggling, still I remained in the sea of suffering!
Like a lone bird amidst a tempest
Vast oceans could not contain all my sadness.*

Then what's left in this life? Perhaps a solitary silhouette on the road under the setting sun, a veil of forest mist looming ahead as the person looks back at a bygone childhood. And the present is like the torrential rain and freezing snow, echoing melancholy melodies.

*There were days when the sun didn't rise,
Here I waited, but the future was not in sight.*

...

*And like that, the rain falls and leaves scatter
Day after day, night follows indifferently!
In my heart, something is missing still,
Like a love that I have yet to discover!*

“Untitled 1”

From *The Dream of a Butterfly*

On life's stormy roads, the Artist, who is now praised by people throughout the world as Supreme Master Ching Hai, continued on Her voyage: one day Germany, the next Italy, England, Nepal, India, and Tibet... Each footstep is directed toward the search, each moment a time for reflection. Searching and reflecting are the seeds of liberation and realization. One cannot sit in an ivory tower and comprehend an ever-changing world. People cannot understand their own fate without relating to the outside world and other beings.

Going forward, embarking on the journey, setting sail out in the ocean... From these processes, the Artist became a philosopher and a thinker. Through self-examination and self-confession, She rid Herself

of personal desires, transient obsessions, superficial wealth and fame, decaying bodies, and fleeting exchanges, to reach for majestic dimensions and glorious heavens:

*I'd lived through days of duplicity,
Professing love not felt genuinely!
Sweet utterances from rosy lips,
Impassioned words from an ice cold heart...*

*I've visited many shores, calm or turbulent,
Cleaning this face and adorning it anew,
Desiring fame, fine houses and wealth,
To enjoy this life, I've abandoned noble ideals...*

*After many struggles, I awoke suddenly
Asking myself, "Is that all there is?"
What does it matter, a few extra tens of years,
To race for fame and gain with efforts so dear!*

"Self Confession"
From *The Old Time*

After colliding with stark reality and fierce competition for fame and profit, if one is still attached to and mired in ignorance, then the physical self will just continue to indulge in transgressions and eventually decompose like the plants. More than anyone, Supreme Master Ching Hai asked Herself, and from this self-reflection the answer resounded:

*What shall I do in the days ahead,
When hair loses luster and youthful rosinness fades?
Is it death or a rebirth when the breath ceases?
Christ and Buddha taught about Heaven and purgatory!*

"Self Confession"
From *The Old Time*

As She continued onward, deep contemplation followed each of Her footsteps. Everywhere She went, She saw traces of sorrow in the human world:

*Back to the old city,
Heard the waking of first love,
But the bird in the cage could no longer fly;
Mixing tears with ink on the page,
Wrote love songs of golden days!*

*Gardens full of shadows of ghosts.
Didn't fade away through wintry rain!
One day I stopped between voyages,
Wondered how much passion left in vain?!...*

“Old Town, Past Love!”

From *The Lost Memories*

The more She traveled along the path, the more Supreme Master Ching Hai realized that this world is only a transient place, and the human being a pitiable creature. With a generous and loving heart, She felt anguish not so much for Herself, but for the human plight:

*That afternoon, I too wanted to be a statue,
Standing in the open space, watching the buzzing scenes.
A strange sadness overcame my sorrowful heart:
The compassion I felt, for me or for the multitude?*

“Winter Afternoon and a Stone Statue”

From *The Dream of a Butterfly*

From pain and misfortune, people learn and mature. The world is eventually seen as an illusion. After experiencing suffering and hardship, the spirit will ascend to the higher regions, becoming ubiquitous like the wind, like an ocean of love and reunion:

*And a stranger, on this foreign Earth,
Walking twilight, hear winds call summer,
Western sun now fragile, rain so soft,
Like the sailing day on Pacific waters.*

*Tender hair, swinging pine forest,
Deep eyes travel through tropical dreams...
Why drowning in ocean of grief?
Come, come home to the sweet silk arms.*

*We shall hail, and adorn the universe,
We shall dance and sing, unite the world,
We shall light golden fires on hilltops,
Warming the sky of wintry future.*

“Love Melody 1”

From *The Lost Memories*

And like a loving mother who always wants her children to be safe and happy, like a dear sister who wants to uplift her unfortunate brothers and sisters from despair:

*I have arrived – do you not know?
Reserved, with me, always the pink lotus.
Awaiting you, generations have passed.
Promised to return, do you not remember?*

*I want to lead you away over the clouds,
Bright with halos, divine music, and lotus in bloom.
Yet you remain lost in the land of illusionary dreams,
Never to have left the old port, yet to be reborn!*

“Eternal Beloved”

From *The Dream of a Butterfly*

One day, there shall be a happy gathering, when the flowers of true love shall blossom. Although the rain and sun, rivers and mountains can keep people physically apart, they cannot contain the tender-hearted feelings humans have for each other, like sunflowers blooming under the sun:

*How many miles to summer?
How many miles to spring?
How many months for one Golden August?
How many days for one Glorious Second?*

“Love Melody 4”

From *The Lost Memories*

Kind and open, the heart of a Saint fills the world. Personal sentiments and self-serving dreams vanish, making room for an immense ocean of love, for tolerance and forgiveness:

*I want to find the celestial granaries
To scatter grains on mountains, forests, to feed all the birds,
When I see, in the wintry gusts,
Poor creatures on ragged wings looking for the leftover!!*

“Buddha’s Sadness”

From *The Dream of a Butterfly*

From lonely traces of previous lives on Earth, walking amid countless human illusions, still at the root, Supreme Master Ching Hai was already an extraordinary being. Born and submerged in a secular world, the noble seed still sprang up, sprouting continuously with every footstep as She traveled in the suffering realm. Each step carried an experience; every look expressed a reflection. From all that, the essence of the universe culminated within Her, enabling Her to reach the eternal soul and an everlasting world, one without either death or birth.

The destination to eternity cannot be arrived at overnight; one has to undergo many incarnations, through hardship and accrued karma:

*Once I came upon an empty mansion
The broken door: spiderwebs curtained
At the gate ajar, crickets chirped!
Through vacant rooms the wind sighed a sad tune
As if ancient spirits wandered about in mourning.*

“Abandoned Mansion”

From *Wu Tzu Poems*

Living in such a dismal world, regardless of how strong a person is, there will be times when he or she feels fragile and distressed:

*Buddha on the radiant dais high above,
I'm so lost, stumbling through the dark road!
I want to be devout, but it seems beyond my reach,
Wanting to be virtuous, yet always deep in blunders and mistakes.*

*Many times I tell myself to repent
But binding ties beckon me toward the reincarnate existence.*

The upheavals in this world never cease their detrimental impact on a pure heart. Desire for fame, glamour and extravagance, wealth and opulence: all have buried countless innocent souls. Supreme Master Ching Hai, too, had gone through all that tumult, yet She did not falter, for Her soul is too expansive: She knew how to rely on the spiritual path to attain self-liberation.

*Once again, I drift aimlessly in the ocean of life
Bewildered, unsure of direction...
At night still dreaming of glory and achievement,
Only to awake and face the reality of broad daylight's frustration!*

*Nightmares are heavy curtains obscuring my wisdom,
And calamities are swaying my faith.
Vulnerable, I gauge every staggering step,
Relying on the light of Buddha's teaching
To guide through the passageway of ignorance.*

The struggle between evil and good, between attachment and freedom, between ignorance and enlightenment, between holding on and letting go, between staying and leaving, between the finite and the infinite, between Earth and Heaven, between impermanence and eternity, is always an intense and tragic struggle. Each choice inevitably carries its own pain and anguish.

*Many times I want to sever all attachments
But my heart clings to old karmic bindings.
Passion weaves its web, daily survival ties my limbs!
The harder the struggle, the deeper the entanglement...*

“Like the Clouds High Above”

From *Wu Tzu Poems*

The worldly path that we traverse daily makes us sink more deeply into the labyrinth. The labyrinth itself has so many of its own amazing attractions – the illusions of life = that we sometimes deceive ourselves, thinking that they are true happiness. Led into the dark maze, we become lost and forget the way back to the celestial kingdom:

*When you came here, celestial dreams were forgotten—
Cherishing some earthly love for self-amusement.*

*Watching you is heartbreaking:
Once entering the labyrinth,
Who knows what lifetime you'll exit!*

“The Labyrinth”
From *Wu Tzu Poems*

There have always been conflicts between people and people, between people and life, between decadence and virtue, between submersion and liberation. Such struggles cause tragedies for human lives, and this is the karma we have to pay for the debts owed from previous incarnations:

*Returning home, there's no joy within me.
Balancing worldly life and Zen, it's just sad and lonely.
Before being born into this material plane,
I've acquired unending debt from previous existence.*

“A Visit to Dharma Flower Temple”
From *Wu Tzu Poems*

Due to the debts incurred from previous lifetimes, due to the choice of separation from the Source, and the struggles of transformation, people at times tend to be resigned: their consciousness and physical bodies have accumulated so much suffering and illusion! Albert Camus, in *Exile and the Kingdom*, bemoaned that the true home of humans must be in some other world and that this Earth is only a place of exile, where people become estranged from themselves and others. When people die is when they truly go back to their beloved homeland and are reborn into their own true world:

*I wait for death each second of the day
Like an expectant mother waiting for the moment of delivery!
Why am I still young, yet to grow wiser?
Ever close to misery, so far from Nirvana...*

“Awaiting Death”
From *Wu Tzu Poems*

To die is to be liberated, and to return to our true and cherished homeland; such is the lamentation of so many lifetimes, of so many thinkers, writers and poets. A poet named Huy Can once wrote:

*Sorrow has ripened, please pluck it down.
Dust receive me whether Heaven or hell.*

In this ephemeral existence, exhausted from struggles in the course of life, human beings often feel despondent and wish to give up. This is common. But for someone like Supreme Master Ching Hai, who has been cultivating the seeds of liberating humanity, of loving sentient beings infinitely, and of dissolving hindering karma, the flower of eternity has already blossomed within Her:

*I love you as I love myself
Like my love for all the continents, rivers and mountains.
Tomorrow's good-bye, who will shed tears?
This bow is to repay your love and deep affection!*

“I Love You”

From *Wu Tzu Poems*

Although She had to walk away from personal relationships, Supreme Master Ching Hai never wanted to abandon anyone. In Her heart, She vowed that one day when She attained enlightenment, She would return to this world to save others:

*Praised be the Buddha whose light guides my way,
And protects you in your lonely days.*

*One day, I'll be enlightened and bring illumination to the world,
We will be together for eternity...*

“For the One Who Stayed Behind”

From *The Dream of a Butterfly*

Her pledge to save humanity was fulfilled. Because of Her great benevolence and profound wisdom, and because the world was still in turmoil, Supreme Master Ching Hai wished not to enjoy the bliss of Nirvana alone. Instead, She returned to this world as a Bodhisattva, walking among the multitude:

*The Bodhisattva's life is filled with hardship
Sentient beings are hard to save, their minds difficult to gauge!
Incarnate into the ephemeral Earth
Borrowing a temporary body to help the world.*

“The Bodhisattva’s Lotus”

From *Wu Tzu Poems*

With the merits derived through Her spiritual practice, She experienced miracles from the Almighty and was immersed in divine love:

*Practiced for thousands of years, just for this hour:
To be near the omnipresent Beloved.*

*You're like a green palm tree in the desert
Protecting my soul with eternal cool shade.
All the treasures in the whole creation
Equal not the dust under Your holy footprints.*

The more blessings She received from the Creator, the more She did not want to enjoy the bliss by Herself. Indeed, She has always been concerned about human ignorance:

*I weep silently, feeling sympathy for the worldlings
On the gloomy path they continue to tread!
You have come, yet no one knows
Your divine being exiled to this sorrow.*

“A Great Holy Master”

From *Wu Tzu Poems*

With a noble heart, a dedication for service, and boundless love, Supreme Master Ching Hai has shared Her inner thoughts and feelings in Her elegant poetry. On the path She traveled, accompanying every saintly footstep were lotus blossoms and an abundance of brilliant verses. The more one reads Her poems, the more one feels a revival of hope, an infinite power, and a pure heart.

In a bleak world filled with misery and illusory memories, it seems as if the soul were sinking in despair. But in the confine of that muddy pond, the seed of divine yearning begins to sprout. The great writer Dostoevsky once said that only those who returned from death have the right to sing in this world.

Supreme Master Ching Hai has reminded us that liberation and enlightenment are to be experienced through patience and endurance, the path through which She already passed. From the lonely and bewildered moments of Her previous lives, Supreme Master Ching Hai experienced firsthand the discovery of liberation and awakening. The roads She traveled were paved with endless suffering, but from there, She cleansed off the dust of life to purify the body, elevate the mind, and find a way to save sentient beings. Her poems reflect this holy path.

Reading Her poetry and observing Her every footstep, we light up our own path and purify ourselves, so that we can follow Her noble journey to arrive at an eternally peaceful realm.

Love



Love Is...

Originally in Aulacese: "Tình Yêu"

*Don't know why I love and miss you so
Such splendor, the melody of sorrow!
Love is a blushing rose blossoming
Gorgeous, radiant, but piercing!*



*Love
in
the
Rain*

Originally in English

*Sending a love message into the nil
Hoping to find you it will
Through the evening chill.*

*Till then, nothing will heal
My heart!
Aching pains.
Dark nights.
Come the wind and cold rain!*

*My heart beats the blue
Longing for you.*

München, Germany
July 1978

Untitled

Originally in Aulacese: "Không Đê"

*The day is gloomy because I'm missing you
Inches apart, yet it feels like miles away...
Lovesick blues, even without bitter wine
Not a taste, yet my heart is intoxicated!*



Asking My Love in Yonder

Originally in Aulacese: "Hỏi Người Bên Nớ"

*Is it because you're not much aware
Each time I come to you, my love I thus declare!
Or are you pretending, causing me such heartbreak?
Alluring eyes, adorable lips, yet so complex!*

*You just go on, aloof and reserved
Letting me wither in silence!
Clouds and wind come and go, leaving no trace
Just like the heart of the one from the ancient capital.*

*Writing my verses, continuing to wait
All this poetic babbling, just an artist's fate!
I keep on praying, but my heart has no faith
Christ and Buddha, why pay no... heed!*

*Waiting for You
in a Mountain Town*

Originally in Aulacese: "Chờ Ai Phố Núi"

*You linger in my world of dreams
Like Lady To,* expectantly I wait,
Silky sun-drenched hair grown long with yearning
Mountain and forest places of old, too, bedazed.*

*With you gone the mountain town became forlorn –
Like the sun searing through my flesh, this separation!
Even summer breeze is too sad to stir,
Feeling sympathy for my weary longing!*

O clouds above, won't you carry my love yonder,
To all ten directions, so this one he will remember?
Lovelorn leaves withered on a deserted hill,
In the sky, cranes seem reluctant to fly!

*G*ather all of time to burn
For months and days to quickly turn,
For sunlight to rejoice on our reunion eve,
And the moon to brighten that enchanting moment eternally.

***Lady Tô** (Tô Thị) was a beautiful young woman whose husband was sent to war. According to Aulacese legend, she turned to stone from waiting on the mountain, day after day, for his unlikely return. “Lady Tô” is therefore a literary reference for exemplary faithfulness and unwavering devotion.



Lovelorn

Originally in Aulacese: "Títong Tít"

*To the heavens, sending all my yearnings
In the rain, hear you not the whisperings of the wind?
A long night, a lonely heart, cold blankets
Love is yet to be kindled,
Sorrow yet to be abated.*

München, Germany
July 1978

Beside You

Originally in Aulacese: "Có Người"

*You have come, and I feel youthful once more,
Like a twinkling star in this magnificent universe.
With a smile as radiant as a gleaming jewel
My barren heart suddenly becomes a joyous festival.*

*Please don't go; and don't say adieu.
Stay here, as if the months and years have not gone by.
Lips brightened with melodious lullabies,
Eyes adorned with luminous golden light.*

*My soul in rapture gazes at you,
Not intoxicated by wine, yet filled with exhilaration!
Words cannot calm my deepest yearnings,
When I'm restless through the long lonely nights.*

*Oh, these moments overflow with honeyed sweetness.
Our passion, still like in the beginning,
Embracing a newly awakened love,
I cherish a beautiful, eternal dream within.*

Together

Originally in Aulacese: "Một Thuở Bên Người"

Translated by the Author

*Once I was beside you
In the afternoon, with greeting leaves and flowers
The autumn clouds were preening on the mountain peaks
The autumn wind sang cheerfully on the hilly meadows.*

*A few days together
I thought it would be forever.
Forgotten was the old loneliness
Like there was no tomorrow...*

Brannenburg, Germany
August 12, 1978

An Unexpected Day

Originally in Aulacese: "Buổi Không Ngờ"

*Since the moment galaxies fused together,
The cosmos has been an invisible tempest!
Tipsy in love, the sun and moon forgot their bashfulness;
The endless night swiftly bloomed into dawn.*

*I've wandered much in the realm of fantasy:
Pebbles and stones mistaken for precious jewels.
So turbulent my world in this intangible maze,
Lost in the illusion, youthful purity faded...*

*Then one day, I entered an astounding dimension;
A thousand-year infatuation from a single glance of passion!
Awestruck since time immemorial, now comes our joyous celebration
The Earth aglow, illuminates all other planets.*

*Taking each other to the eternal shore,
Thousands of words halted at our lips!
A warm embrace filled with deep affection,
Sweetly fragrant breath perfumed Earth and Heaven.*



Predestined Love

Originally in Aulacese: "Tiên Duyên"

*Sending the rhythm of my heartbeats
Into a tender night of predestined love
Even one day when we're far away
Blissful melodies of this time,
The stream will still play...*

Brannenburg, Germany
August 12, 1978

*Forever
Still*

Originally in Aulacese:

“Vân Dài Lâu”

*Please turn back, darling, and don't linger;
Let the first moments stay in our sweet memory forever.
So golden and precious our blossoming love –
Unforgettable even from afar!*

*Departing from the peak of affection, be not reluctant –
Just a touch of sorrow, let me retain!
To partake in the agony of separation and the joy of reunion,
Deepen my heart with yearning!*

*Don't think about, ask for, or even deny
The lonely corners of our lives.
The world continues to turn, rainfall or sunshine,
Viewing life's vicissitudes as but a game!*

*A hundred years on this meaningless stage,
Face upturned, I laugh aloud in the midst of love.
Heaven and Earth revolve eternally, just let it be!
Night or dawn, it doesn't really matter to me...*

The Day You Left!...

Originally in English

*Even the beautiful woods in Munich
Lost all their glory
The day you parted out of me.*

*I'm dying... dying!
I want to escape flying!
Out of myself,
Out of your net,
Out of the tortoise shell.*

But it's so hard, so hard!

*You wingless creature,
You total stranger!
"For thou art a stranger
In the land of Egypt."
...So, down you lie,
Leaving the world behind!
Like a tomb of death,
Autumn leaves covered,
And he left you!*

München, Germany – October 1978
For R. B.
On a sad day in bed

Dream

Originally in English

*Last night,
I had a beautiful dream.
I heard footsteps
And your sweet voice, humming!*

*Dared not stir awake,
I was afraid the dream would disappear.
After a long while
I opened my eyes,
And the wonderful reverie turned into a nightmare
'Cause, you were not there.*



Waiting for You

Originally in Aulacese: "Chò Ai"

It rained all night long!

The one I love didn't come...

Wind and clouds have no sympathy

For the one who waits alone!



Staying by the windowsill, just as in times past,

When garden pebbles were jubilant,

And flowers were vibrant

As your footsteps quickly passed by.

*There's only me now;
The pebbles lie silent.
Flowers frayed by the wind,
Washed away by the rain,
All our deep affection!*

*Why not even say good-bye?
Why so coldhearted!
Even half a day is still love
One day can fill the heart's devotion.*

*You've taught me sorrow,
Love and its pain to know.
Will you ever return?
Bring back our golden dreams!*

*Love
on
the
Side*

Originally in Aulacese: "Tinh Lẽ"

*Please go on; return to your old flame,
And leave me in pain from your leftover love!
Not long ago we were so intimate
But now love has been cast to the wind and the clouds.*

*Who could keep a traceless promise?
Words only from your lips, I thought were everlasting!
Now it has come to this; what of future dream?
My tender embrace cannot hold on to our days of happiness.*

*You came into my life in a rush, then left so hurriedly.
Counting the long days and months, I remain here only...
Evening turned its back and twilight faded;
Night anxiously hid traces of decline.*

*Looking ahead, seeing only the past,
Hearing raindrops, thinking they were your footsteps!
Each leaf bids farewell to autumn forever
Sad fingers gather pieces of a fallen amour!*

*You've gone away and won't ever return,
The days are long and the nights relentless.
Willow trees already turned gray some seasons ago,
Why am I still keeping this sorrow!*

*Each winter eve, memories beside the glowing embers,
Remembering you left without a care.
Incense rekindles the feeling of bygone days.
Through the long night, I hope for dawn's arrival.*

Fear

Originally in English

Everyone looks like you on the streets.

I dare not look around,

I dare not listen to musique,

For it brings tears.

Everything reminds me of you.

How can I live?

How can I forget you?

What am I going to do

In the days ahead?

I feel so restless,

But nowhere to go.

I wonder if you know

How I live

How I die

How I survive

This worst tragedy of my life,

And if you're really happy

where you live?

*The more I mingle in the public
The lonelier I become.
The crowd gets larger,
My heart sinks deeper.
Oh Lord! How to get through this?
There is not much to do
To cover my sadness.
Though I try hard to forget,
It's just impossible.*

*Don't you know it's terrible
To be abandoned?
When you're so deeply in love with someone
And can't express.
Oh Lord, help me to forget,
Or bring him back to me.
Let me live happily,
Or let me die now in peace.
I am torn apart,
I've lost direction.
Wherever I turn
Seems like it's the end of the road.*



Untitled 2

Originally in Aulacese: "Không Đê 2"

*God exiled a tiny swallow to the riverbank,
One stormy night, its delicate wings were broken!
Alas, it was intoxicated by a love potion,
And forgot the way back to Heaven!*

Gone!

Originally in English

*Since you went away
I sleep with your blanket,
Your pillows,
And sit in your usual place,
Feel the aches
Feel the tears.*

*I cannot imagine the tenderness
Which we shared
Was overnight shattered!*

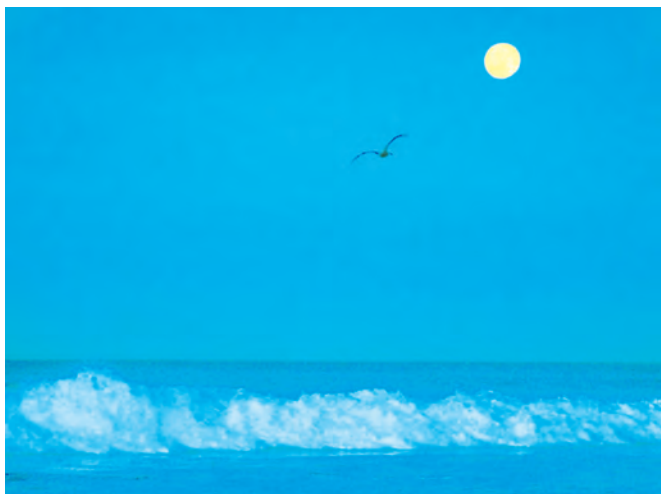
*I could not imagine the gentle person I love
Turned around
And forgot our passionate memories!
O God, help me!
I couldn't even retain the faith
In Thee!*

*As if the whole world
Became meaningless,
Empty!
I could not die
I cannot live.*

*Now I believe
That hell exists
After all.*

*Oh, why not just let me die?
The doctrines hold me back.
Yet the pain
Is so intense and naked,
I have nowhere to hide.*

*No one
Nothing can bring me comfort.
I am in the deepest sorrow,
Ever known in the existence of this planet.
Hell cannot be so bad
In comparison!*



Will of a Would-Be Dead!

Originally in Aulacese: "Di Chuc"

Translated by the Author

*If I die tomorrow,
Please stay here and amuse yourself with others.
Life is only a hundred years span short,
Woke up from a dream, I thought it's over!*

München, Germany
September 1979

Faded Love

Originally in Aulacese:

"Tiuh Bc"

*Oh rivers flowing downstream
Carrying for me a few hopes and dreams
You have gone, leaving love barely alive
Water ferns aimlessly drift and clouds still float by!*

*Oh boats that sail to destinations unknown,
Leaving me by the bridge, waiting without end.
A day of longing seems like a thousand years,
Forest wind howls, starry path abandoned!*

*How long must I go on searching
For some lingering fragrance, remnants of a dream?
Gathered together, not enough to fill a past warm embrace!
Why let youthful eyes turn aloof?*

*Half a year of flaming passion, now like the setting sun,
Like evaporating ocean foams and storms crashing onto life.
A barren desert of salty sand is left behind.
At nightfall a river of tears floods my lips...*

*Why
Am I
Still
in Love?*

Originally in Aulacese:

“Sao Mãi Còn Thương”

*Why do I still love and miss you so?
Memories of an early summer day, an evening of joy...
Fragrant hair, sparkling eyes, words like pearls
Radiate a smile from deep within my soul.*

*You passed by, elegant as a bamboo tree,
Each footstep echoing from the earth a sweet melody.
I secretly dreamed of holding your hand,
Confiding in you my love, my hopes, and my longing...*

*But still, you looked over yonder
For one as charming as a nymph,
Not knowing that my heart would become a tempest
Each time your silhouette was cast near the window.*

*Silently I whispered your name,
Hiding my tears whenever I saw you.
Stirred by the breeze, your intoxicating fragrance
Lively footsteps, the rhythm of sweet autumn.*

*Oh my heart, come nurture a will of iron,
And forget a history of passion.
Let the one with a handsome face and rosy lips
Disappear into the clouds, far away from my thinking.*

*Oh my heart, calm the whirling wind on the lake,
And awaken from this empty daydream!
Wishing you a future filled with happiness
As I count autumn leaves fluttering adrift.*

*Where
Are
You
Now,
My
Love?*

Originally in Aulacese:

“Người Đâu”

*Where are you now, forever far away?
Why is our love separated by rivers and mountains?
Where I am now, the moon is waning,
The lamplight flickers.
Holding this melancholy, just myself and I...*

*You're on the other side of the world, while I am here,
On the misty mountain, chilly in the long night.
While you busily pursue your worldly dreams
With each passing autumn, my hair turns more gray!*

*Feeling so sad, not really knowing why,
Seeing life as river and rain flowing by.
The time of reunion so rare...
So soon comes the separation!
Do you still remember love's fragrance?*

*Oh love! Let us visit tomorrow.
In your presence, the moon and stars will once again glow
In mine, the day will radiate brilliant sunlight
And our love melody will resonate evermore...*

A Touch of Fragrance

Originally in Aulacese:

"Một Chút Hương"

*You went so far away, no fragrance remained;
Wind-filled sails disappeared beyond the horizon.
The moon returned, dim and lonely,
Over the entire planet,
In which corners will it be shining?*

*You left, taking with you all the music and poetry,
Leaving here only a few hollow tunes.
This intense longing makes me feel like death;
Wind howls in my soul, rain pours in my heart!*

*What's left behind – just desolate towns
Hills and mountains stand in the freezing fog.
My footsteps echo the sound of melancholy,
Wistful pebbles long for the vast sea.*

*Do you remember the moment our hands parted?
Your eyes, deep as the bluest sky!
Is my heart shedding tears or blood?
Heaven and Earth both abandoned me... Why?*

How Can I Forget...

Originally in Aulacese: "Lâm Sao Quên"

*Oh, distant sail in the open sea
Take with you these teardrops along with the morning dew.
My love, do you remember our time under the moonlight?
Why are you so far away from me still?*

*I've cried 'til the love spring turned dry
Yet you were cold like a stone statue!
Blood in my heart and tears in my eyes
Like waterfalls rushing from the mountain high!*

*Oh my soul is filled with longing evermore
Love once given shall not be taken back
I fear my world will become a turbulent sea
Fearing the loneliness enshrouding me.*

*Dear God, I know not how to pray
Though my heart overflows with waves of agony.
Twilight passes, followed by yet another sunset
Who knows when this immense sorrow will cease?*

*I cannot laugh, nor can I cry!
Wondering if I'm still the same me?
What little love lingers on my pillow:
Naught but a forlorn blanket, chilling my skin!*

*River, wherever you're going
Won't you cleanse my heart and free it from yearning?
Days and months, arriving belatedly
Erase all seasons of intimacy!*

*Dear heart, don't be sad or restless in the night;
Just sleep away this miserable lifetime.
Our love died on that very day;
Vows of faithfulness, too, have faded away!*

*Oh night, don't last any longer;
I've measured many hours of sorrow.
Oh day, just float away like the vast wind,
Pulling the current of fate to the deep river.*

*Oh heart, carry no longer the past –
My shoulders already heavy with a sad refrain.
Still keeping our memories, however remote
When will all this ever end?*

*I knew life was like the fleeting wind and clouds
And love as tricky as a sleight of hand!
Oh dream, awaken me from this empty illusion:
The waning moon shines on the harbor at early dawn!*

*Quietly I wept when the storm had calmed
Half my soul is dead, the other half in pain.
Why were broken love stories ever devised?
Why does the Creator often stage such turmoil?*

*The night is late, yet I'm still awake
In the whole wide world, who knows my sadness?
I shouldn't really remember you, yet I can't forget
What to do with this love of mine, I know not!*

*Now that we're apart, you, I don't ever expect to see
Just hope that you've really forgotten me.
I beg myself to think of you nevermore
If love can't be together, then let's part from sorrow.*

*Through lonely nights and darkened morns,
What do I have left to love and be hopeful?
Forget, forget, and forget it all!
Into the lovelorn river, I scatter an ill-fated amour!*



' 40'

*The path today is blooming with roses
Just like those first times we met
Just like those first times I came to visit...*

*The path today is resplendent with white blossoms
Just like those first times, to visit you I came
Just like those first times we met.
They were wild flowers, but so exquisite!*

*The
Old
Path*

*The brook today is only half full
Flowing ever so gently like when we first met
Serenading with glorious songs of eternity
Sweet as love when new, and fresh.*

Originally in Aulacese:

“Lối Cũ”

*Against the emerald stream, against the stream of time,
Days and months appear as if in a dream.
Today I stroll along the old path,
Reliving each second, each minute, each hour...*

Wildbad, Germany – 1981
For Buff



Passing by Your House

Originally in Aulacese: "Qua Nlà Ai"

*I came by your house,
The shadows falling under evening lights,
Autumn rain drenched the rosy clouds.
I wanted to come in, but feared the stone cold heart;
Disappeared in an instant was our eternal love.*

*Half a lifetime, searching in illusory dreams,
For an image precious as gold and gems
Lovelorn through the long months and years
I adored you on the silken pedestal of love.*

*Then awakened suddenly, one glorious dawn,
Rays of life illuminated the dark recesses of my soul.
The fruit of sadness had ripened, falling away.
But then night came, clutching a blanket, I feel lonely!*


*I've had enough of life's bittersweet;
Hanging up the oars,
I care not to cross the river anymore.
But in the evening, on a quiet harbor,
My wistful heart longs for the waves of yore.*

*On this eve I wandered toward the old path;
The flickering lamp stood ever so lonely.
I wanted to come in, but feared the stone cold heart;
Our eternal love died so long ago!*


Wildbad, Germany – 1981

Forget Me Not

Originally in English

*Do you know, my beloved
Of a dreamy flower called Forget Me Not 
Whose Color is a mysterious blue*

*The Color of Heaven,
Of the Celestial firmament,
The hue of galaxies beyond,
The Color of love *

*Know or not know,
Forget Me Not *



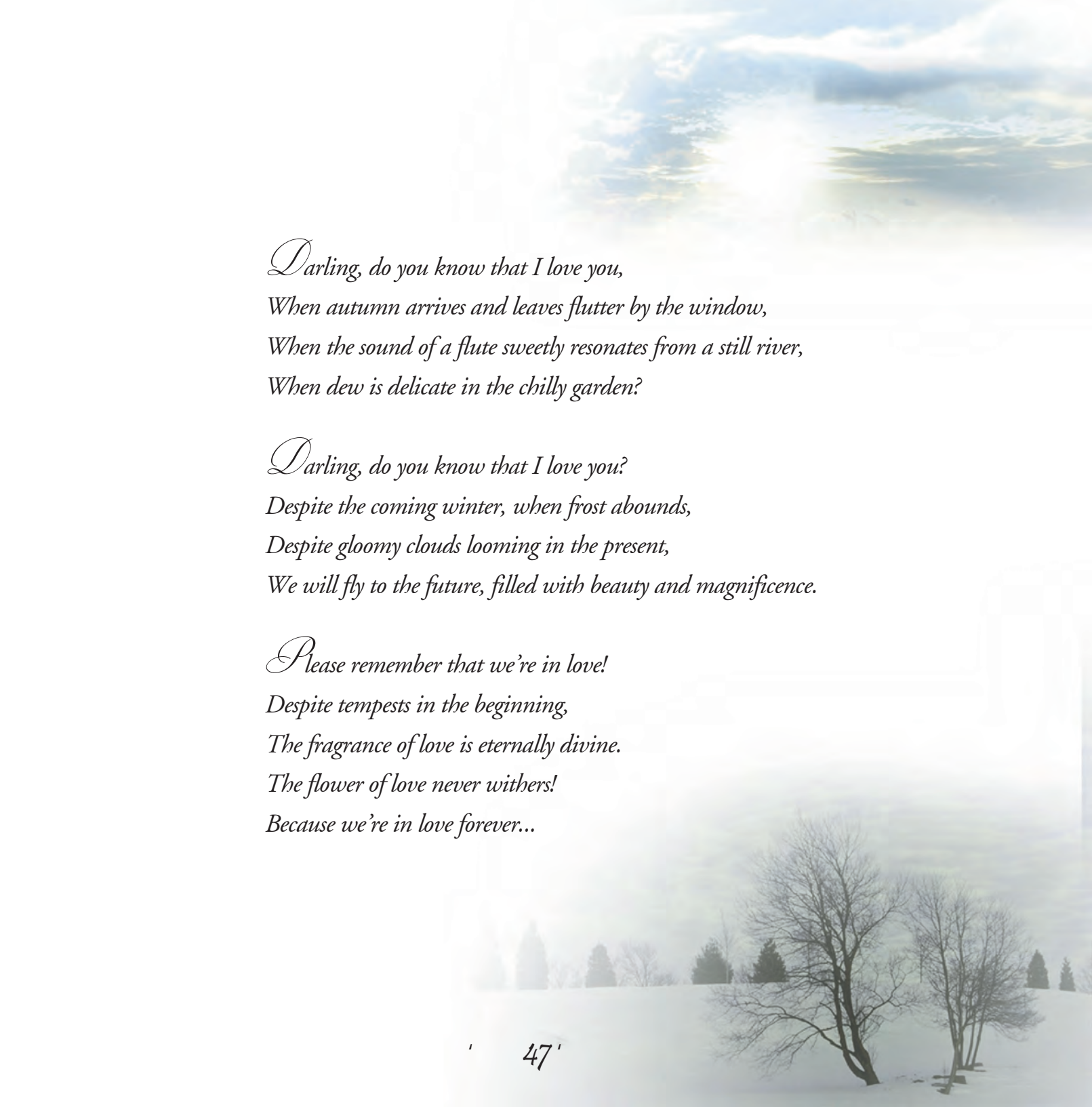


Darling, Do You Know...

Originally in Aulacese: "Anh Có Biết"

*Darling, do you know that I love you,
When spring embroiders blossoms on the boughs,
When the perfumed wind shepherds its sweet fragrance through your hair
When young birds fill the sky azure?*

*Darling, do you know that I love you,
When golden summer sings to the clear clouds,
When lotus flowers bloom brightly in the pond,
When red poinciana petals quickly fall outside your wall?*



*Darling, do you know that I love you,
When autumn arrives and leaves flutter by the window,
When the sound of a flute sweetly resonates from a still river,
When dew is delicate in the chilly garden?*

*Darling, do you know that I love you?
Despite the coming winter, when frost abounds,
Despite gloomy clouds looming in the present,
We will fly to the future, filled with beauty and magnificence.*

*Please remember that we're in love!
Despite tempests in the beginning,
The fragrance of love is eternally divine.
The flower of love never withers!
Because we're in love forever...*



War





Our Ancestral Legacy

Originally in Aulacese: "Di Sân Ông Cha"

Translated by the Author

*A world full of widows
A world of fatherless children
Oh! My brother,
When will the storm ever end?*

*I am not growing up to be a heroic soldier
To protect this war and die
For decades, green grass has overgrown thousands of tombs!*

*The day I was grown up
My father told me
Of his many beautiful dreams.
The day I just came of age
He left for me
Only a wrecked, cold body!...*

*Let me live forever
To keep this legacy:
The cherished golden dreams
Yet to end under the sorrowful grave!*

*Let me survive
To inherit this legacy:
To build shattered dreams
Into tomorrow's warm homes.*

*I am going to live till a hundred and one,
Have sons, daughters, and grandchildren,
To rebuild from a world of death and grieving
With the widows and orphans.*

*Oh! My brother, please go home
Calm your rage.*

*Oh! My brother, together with me
Quiet the storm.*

London, England – 1974



Memo

Originally in English

*It reminds me of you
Wild grasses trembling souls,
In a late afternoon of September.
Why am I still here
While you have gone forever?*

Sheffield, England – 1974

Farewell Song

~ For all the refugees in the world

Originally in English

Where are you going, my winter sun?

Won't, won't you miss me

Stay'n on this side

Of the sea?...

Where have you gone to, my tender moon?

How, how I miss you

Stand'n on this shore,

Water blue!

*I wish we could sail
To the same destination.
I want to break these chains...
Oh! My desperation!*

*When will I see you, my everything?
Won't someone hold you
When you wake up crying?*

*Where... where are you now, my only one?
Won't someone tell me
If you will ever return?*

München, Germany – 1978

I Will Tell You

~ For the refugee X

Originally in English

...Sure! I have seen so many things

During the civil war.

My heart was bleeding

Since the age of "teen"!

...Well! What do you want to hear

About the civil war?

Or the glorious culture

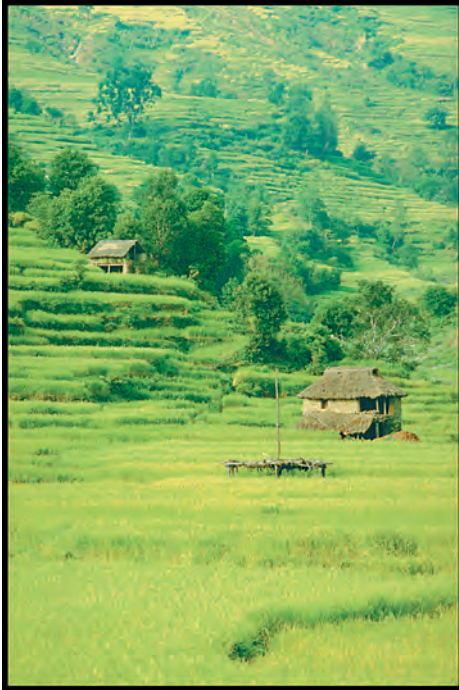
Of five thousand years?

Come closer my friends,

And give me your hand!

It's a long... long way

To your continent.



I am exhausted!

I am dying!

I am cold and shivering!

I am starving!

Come closer my friends,

And give me your hand!

And I will tell ye

Everything of the misery.

...Sure! I have seen so many things

During the civil war.

My heart's still bleeding

From what I have seen!

...Well! What do you want to know

About the civil war?

Your heart will be bleeding hard!

And mine, once more!

Brannenburg, Germany

January 12, 1978



A Mother in Exile

Originally in Hualacese: "Nguoi Me Liu Vong"

*This piece of dry bread, I'm swallowing
To nourish the stream of milk for your daily feeding.
A spirit of faith sustained
Through a thousand miles of weary exile.
Hope you can stay full for a little while, my child;
With these frail hands,
Mom will extract the essence
Of this ephemeral existence.*

*A
Farewell
to
My
Child*

*Originally in Aulacese:
"Tiễn Con Ngàn Dặm"*

*My child, just follow the others;
I can neither laugh nor cry at this moment!
Night after night trails of tears have fallen,
Missing you and our bygone heaven!*

*You're like a leaf drifting in the wind,
Floating on the river of life to different shores,
I pray to God for your safety,
Dare not dream of our reunion one day!*

*You've gone to the end of the horizon,
The world is vast, who knows if a return is ever to come?
In the heart of a stormy ocean,
I wonder what the tiny sea shell longs for?*

*Just try and smile, my child,
Dry your woeful tears and go with the others.
Tragedy has befallen you at a tender age,
This life is such, who'd dare to reincarnate!*

*It Cannot
Go On
Forever!*

For the girl named Huong

Originally in English

*I used to walk over dead bodies
Of our so-called “enemies”
On the way to school,
When I was very young!*

*My aunt’s house was blown up
When she was thirty-four.
I couldn’t recognize her face,
Next morning anymore.*

*Will we be born in another life?
I wondered all the time.
And where go those broken legs,
Broken fingers, broken minds?
Will they ever join together
To complete a “next life”?...*

*I used to see houses burnt to ashes
On the way home from town.
All the life-time's hard work,
Fell ashed to the ground!*

*And the olds went crazy,
The youngs got nervous breakdowns,
And the children, hungry,
With nothing to grow!*

*My uncle was arrested,
Accused of being with "the other side."
My angry young cousin
Refused the army, refused to fight.
They were both in prison:
Two sentences for life!*

*Many of my relatives,
High ranking in the army –
But they are half dead, half crippled
Couldn't help any...*

*I saw many things,
That I will never forget.
All these horrible feelings,
Rooted deeply in my head...*

*I wondered who was right,
And wondered who was wrong.
They both had their reasons
And beliefs thousands strong!*

*Who was I to make the choice?
I only wanted to live my life in peace.
One way or another,
This cannot go on forever...*

*I couldn't change the war, so I changed my life.
Not gonna be a killer, to join either side.*

*I was glad to be a woman,
With a little good looks,
To trade for my freedom,
For another sky I chose to be "reborn."*

*I became a prostitute to survive the capital town,
I married a G.I. for a passport to get out.
OK, I didn't marry for love.
But how many others can vow?...*

*I got my freedom, I got my visa.
It cost hundreds of dollars
From my poor husband's pocket,
I owed him my life and more!*

*But I've never been quite happy.
I miss my village, I miss my family,
I miss the smoke from home cooking, rising in the sunset,
While cows and buffaloes walk back leisurely.*

*I miss the moonshine on the backyard,
Many beautiful nights before the war.
And New Year wind opened all gates
When golden rice glittered precious,
And roasted yams sweet as sugar
And children were allowed to play till late hours...*

*Even the opera singing that I did not like,
The black satin costume our women wear every day
That I thought as peasant and grievous,
I miss them now, so far away.
I miss all the places I did not see,
Ha Noi, Hai Phong, Lang Son, Hon Gay...
How many more on the other side of river Ben Hai?
Closed in like prison, after armistice-settlement-Genève.*

*I miss the food, as I miss the poems,
The lover of my first dream,
The schoolmates: some alive, some dead,
The black humor and the double meanings.*

*I miss everything, I miss everywhere,
The places and the things I could not share.
But if I happen to go back,
Will I still belong there!?!...*

London, England – 1975

He Couldn't Buy

~ For the girl who left for Australia

Originally in English

*I had to leave with John for the safety,
But I couldn't tell,
I couldn't tell the sun to come with me.
He stays on the other side,
He stays on the other side of the sea!*

*I had to go with John for the money,
But I couldn't tell,
I couldn't tell my heart to come with me.
She stays on the other side,
She stays on the other side of the sea!*

*Oh my heart, what can it do for me?
It gives you feeling...
—But Johnny gives me everything!*

*Oh my sun, what can he do for me?
He gives you beautiful colors...
–But Johnny gives me big dollars!
Thank you Johnny! Thank you Johnny!
Big dollars, big dollars you have brought me free!
Why didn't you,
Why couldn't you... buy my heart for me?!*

*I had to leave with John for the security,
But I couldn't take,
I couldn't take the sun along with me.
He stays on the other side,
He stays on the other side of the sea!*

*John has brought me here with a lot of money,
But he couldn't buy,
He couldn't buy my heart along with me!
She stays on the other side,
She stays on the other side of the sea!...*

Saigon, Au Lac – 1970

*Freedom
and
Dollars*

For the girl in
Sydney, Australia

Originally in English

*I am gonna be a call girl!
Don't want to hear any further
How much you love me and look forward
To the day we share our future.*

*As for my future, you should not share.
It's enough that I alone should bear
All the pains and shamelessness,
I know, I know, it isn't fair!*

*Sixty thousand dollars, do you understand?
The minimum amount I have to earn
For the freedom of a family of six:
My parents, two sisters, and my two sons.*

*I cannot bring out two or one
I'll bring them all, or I'll bring none,
Or I'll live through life as dead.
Grief and sorrow will rot my bones!*

*I am gonna be a prostitute!
F... day and night, head over heels!
To earn this money they ask.
Or else I'll go to Vietnam and surrender myself*

*And go to prison and die there with them,
My beloved family, the captured victims.
Oh God, help me to fulfill my task!
It cannot be true, but cannot be dream!*

Oh! Vietnam, Vietnam!
Oh! The curses on this country:
War after war, century after century
Why don't you just disappear with the sunset?
I will sing on the hill
While burning bad history!

Sixty thousand might not mean much to someone
But it's a fortune, for I have none!
Me, the "stranger in the land of Egypt"
Me, no money, no home...

Oh! Vietnam, Vietnam!
Oh! The curses on this country:
Why don't you just sink deep under the sea!
Why don't you melt in the Noah deluge!
I will cry only once
While burning bad history...

München, Germany – 1978



Yearning for Past Spring

Originally in Aulacese: "Xuân Nay Nhớ Xuân Xưa"

*My sweet sister, do you ever dream about
Yellow apricot blossoms by the terrace in past springs?
I'm now in the West, so far away
Missing all very much in my heart!*

*My dear brother, do you ever dream about
Silk dresses, brocade shoes, and red firecrackers all over the city?
Young women, flowing tresses in the breeze,
Leisurely strolls on emerald grass, tender memories...*

*Last night I dreamt of my hometown
Seeing my brothers and sisters, so much to talk about!
Beside a bowl of savory spinach soup
And lullabies melodious as the rhythm of the swinging hammock...*

*Oh, how I missed the thatched house of old!
Mother, hair graying, gentle as the cooling shade of coconut groves,
Father, dignified as in saintly kings' eras,
And Grandma's tasty meal that warmed rainy winter!*

*And sisters and brothers and the fragrant rice field
And past adolescent love like a sad refrain!
All swept away by the bloody river of war
Dissolved in that evening of chaos long ago.*

*I stand amidst a snow-laden Western country,
Languishing for the grass by the breezy Perfume River!
The heavens pity and shed their tears,
Adding chill to the heart of someone far away from home!*

München, Germany
Spring 1979

Reminiscing

For Q. T. and B. D.

Originally in Aulacese: "Tưởng Niệm"

*Reminiscing about ten years past,
The time when we wandered the streets of Saigon.
Now apart, I'm still thinking of you,
Regretting a love that seemed insensitive!*

*Saigon long ago, you and I, we both struggled so.
Many evenings we shared a single bowl of rice.
Pockets empty, many times walking along shaded boulevards,
Singing out in the night, not a care if the world didn't survive!*

*Three long years you sweetly indulged me, while I rejected your affection.
Just couldn't love you the way you loved me.
Ten years have gone by – it seems like yesterday.
Are you still there, or have you passed away?*

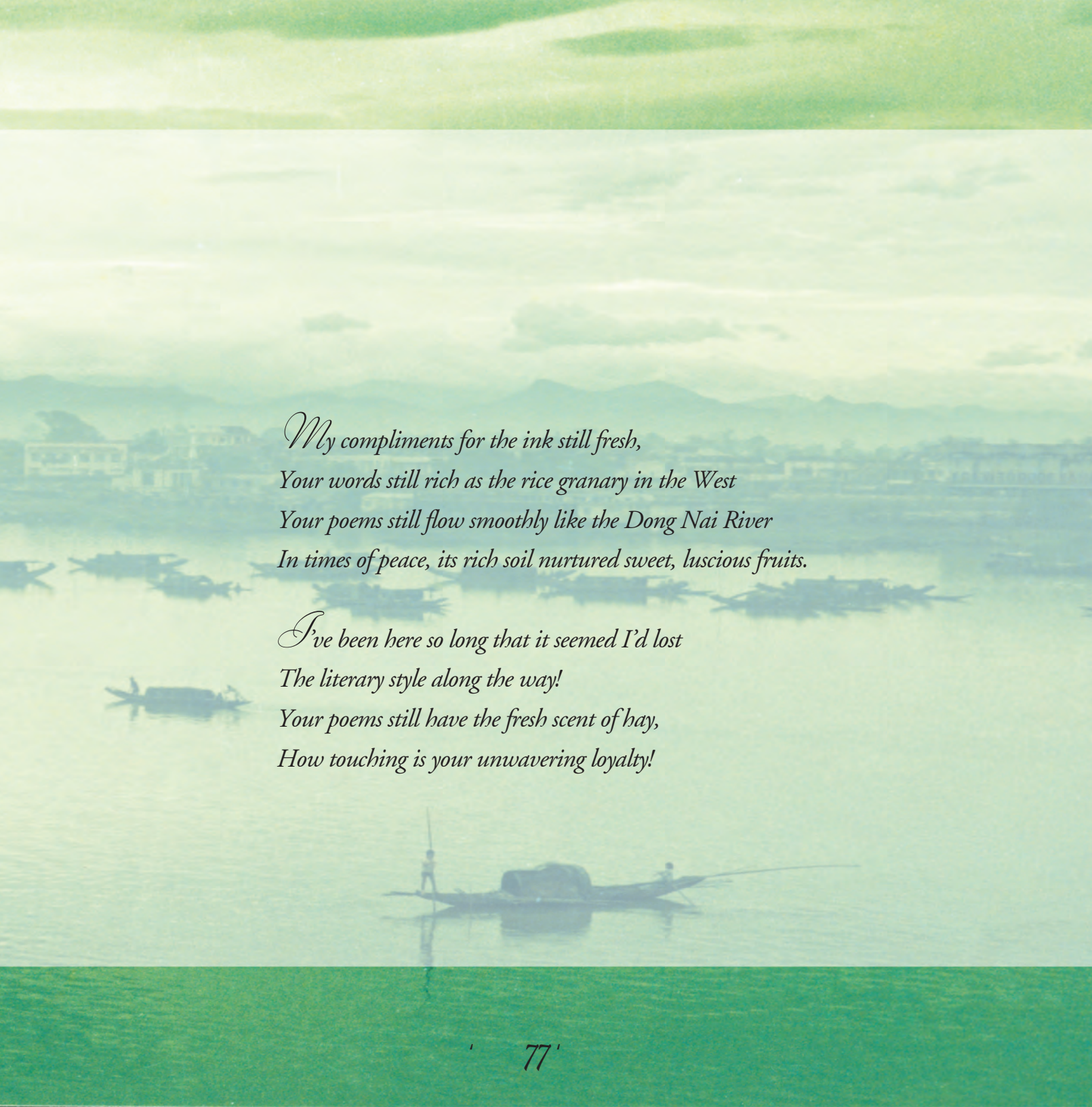
*Life changes and people drift apart.
After many years, even gold and stones were shattered!
My apologies to you in our faraway homeland:
Love wasn't as glorious as in fantasy –
I'm ever worn out from finding daily necessities,
Bearing worldly debt, traveling the cosmos!*

To Vinh Liem

Originally in Aulacese: "Giữ Vinh Liem"

*Your poetry arrived from the American continent,
So poignant like South Vietnamese operas!
I read it quickly, then laughed and suddenly cried,
Feeling sympathy for the one who lost his country.*

*Strangely sad after reading your poems,
Breakfast forgotten, newspapers lay waiting,
All day long I missed the winter rain and summer sunlight,
Missing Saigon, lovesick dreamy nights!*

The background is a soft, green-tinted photograph of a river valley. In the foreground, a large, dark boat with two people is on the water. The middle ground shows a river with several smaller boats. The background features rolling hills and mountains under a hazy sky. The overall mood is peaceful and serene.

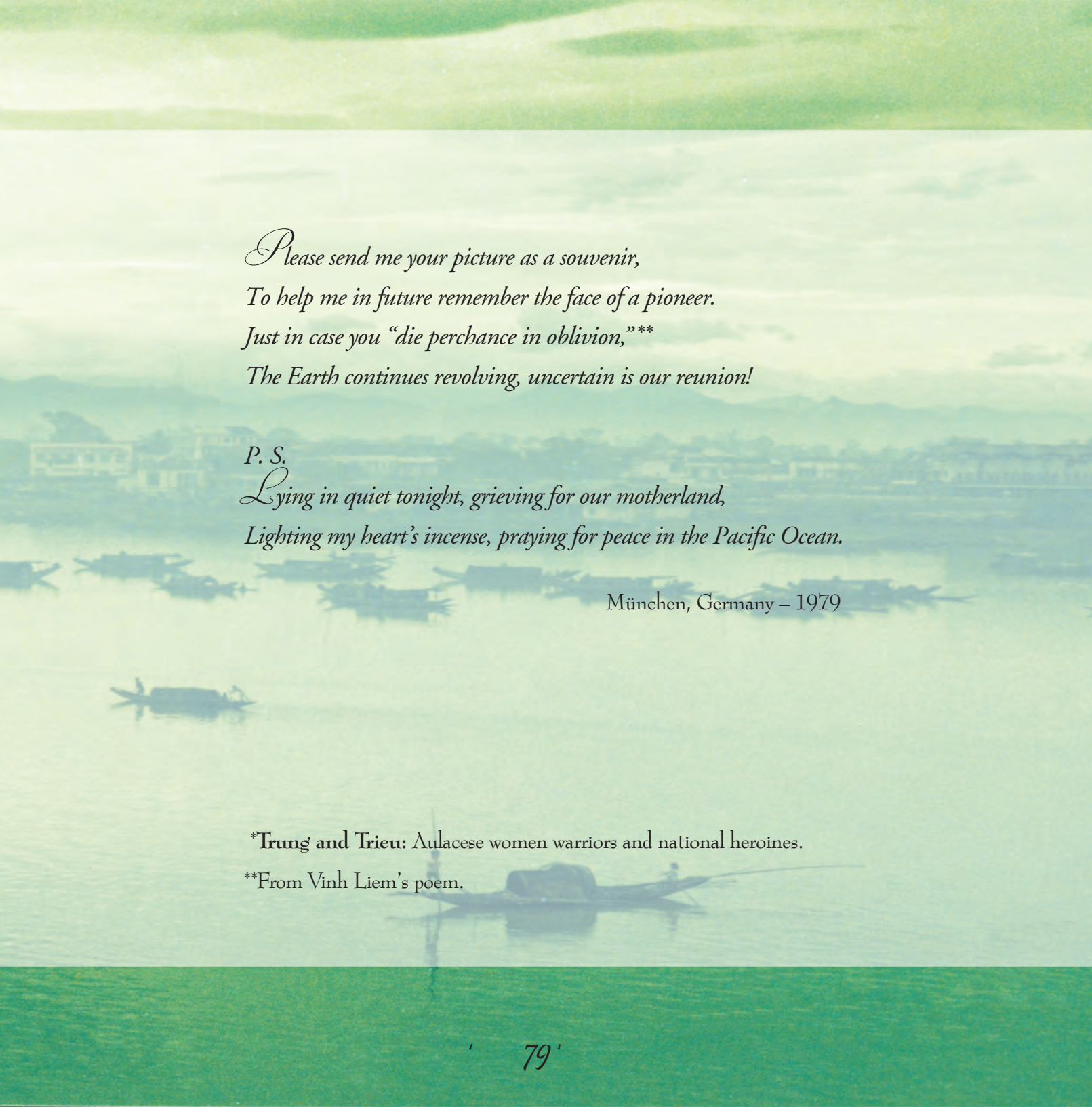
*My compliments for the ink still fresh,
Your words still rich as the rice granary in the West
Your poems still flow smoothly like the Dong Nai River
In times of peace, its rich soil nurtured sweet, luscious fruits.*

*I've been here so long that it seemed I'd lost
The literary style along the way!
Your poems still have the fresh scent of hay,
How touching is your unwavering loyalty!*

*Hats off to honor such spirit of devotion,
Although in exile, you still display patriotic allegiance.
One's home country means the people, parents, siblings, and spouses,
It's the essence of four thousand years' civilization...*

Reading your poetry I'm inspired to emulate Trung and Trieu
But until now, I've only penned love poems!
Recalling history I'm ashamed to stand before our ancestors:
A nation lost, homes destroyed, yet I remained shamelessly silent!*

*As I'm writing these lines from West Germany,
Vietnam hasn't been erased from the face of the globe!
Remember that even if mountains crumble and rivers run dry,
You may be gone, but history remains for thousands of years.*



*Please send me your picture as a souvenir,
To help me in future remember the face of a pioneer.
Just in case you “die perchance in oblivion,”**
The Earth continues revolving, uncertain is our reunion!*

*P. S.
Lying in quiet tonight, grieving for our motherland,
Lighting my heart’s incense, praying for peace in the Pacific Ocean.*

München, Germany – 1979

***Trung and Trieu:** Aulacese women warriors and national heroines.

**From Vinh Liem’s poem.



A Prisoner's Will

Originally in Aulacese: "Di Chúc Người Tù"

*After many years of separation, I received news of you
Returning home with glory and victory.
One morning, when sunlight streamed to every corner,
Loudspeakers boomed through villages and cities!*

*The entire nation sighed in relief,
Believing that rivers would no longer be stained with red blood.
Children joyously sang, watching the flag flying in the wind,
And tears rolled down the cheeks of devoted wives, rejoicing for their husbands...*

*Pushing through the sea of boisterous crowd,
Straining to get a glimpse of your familiar face;
Years already passed, from a dream just awakened,
Would you be like me, overwhelmed with mixed emotions?*

*But you turned away like a total stranger,
Commands steely like bullets thundering by the ear:
Arresting other brothers, killing relatives and friends in the hamlet
Horrific laments echoing through the high mountain and long river!*

*In the dark prison, I recalled vivid memories:
Those innocent days, just you and me.
Oh dear God! I'll never understand,
What changed you, and changed life totally?*

*In the dark prison, I envisioned people in the thousands
Drifting on unfamiliar oceans beyond the horizon:
In search of freedom, they risked their lives
Begging for compassion and subsistence in foreign lands!*

*I'm ashamed to face the entire world,
Four thousand years of civilization – how my heart pained deeply!
In this dark gloomy cell, I'd rather die tonight
Than bear the same name with you on this planet!*

München, Germany – 1978



*In Anguish over
the Loss of One's Country*

For the demonstrators in Bonn

Originally in Aulacese: "Tít Nỗi Buồn Vong Quốc"

*There were days with thoughts of my homeland
Heartbroken, teardrops formed many a poem.
Restless nights, anguished over loss of country,
My spirit flew to all languished prisons!*

*My heart shed blood, seeing compatriots in chains
My soul cried for the elderly in withered bodies
Why more cruel than devils, if they too are human?
Torturing villagers, sparing not even their own flesh and blood!*

*Today we come together, side by side,
Flags flying in the wind, brightening the night
Banners held high, full of vengeance
Choked by tears, words cannot pour out all the anger!*

From Augsburg, München, Nürnberg...

*Together we march under the open sky,
Despising tyranny, filled with sorrow for our motherland,
Sounds of fury smolder on our lips.*

Long live freedom!

Long live martyred heroes!

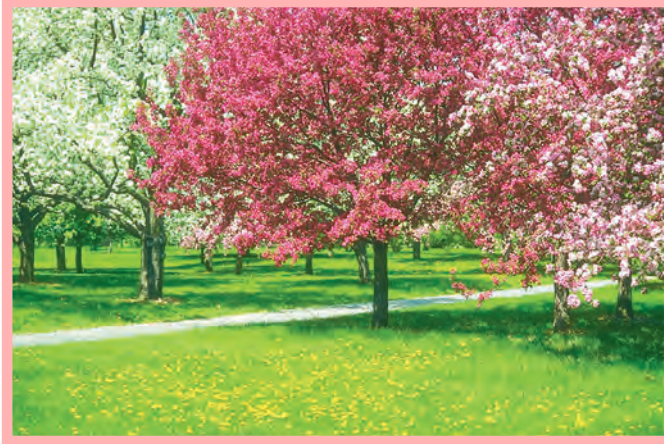
Treating death lightly as a feather!

History will memorialize your names.

The world today has just awakened,

Horrified to see the fangs and claws of wild beasts in humans!

München, Germany
March 6, 1982



To a Münchener I Love

Originally in English

*When winter comes,
I will invite you to the other side of the globe.
I will show you my hometown,
When the sun rises fully on hilltops.*

*When spring is there
And the fragrance of flowers perfumes the air,
You will see my golden childhood
In the new-clothed innocences playing everywhere!*

*When autumn arrives,
We shall go to the mountains collecting orchids,
Hanging from many trees that grow so high!
Or bathe under a waterfall, and run through the field barefooted,
Feeling carefree like the wings of butterflies.*

*When summer comes,
We shall go to the shores and swim in the Pacific,
Hide away from the sun, under the shade of pine trees,
Drinking coconut milk, eating cool melons and fresh nuts,
Building high sand castles, and sending them into the sea!...*

*That is, if summer ever returns to my homeland
And spring ever comes back!
And if autumn will offer encore orchids
Or there will be only winter with sobbing rain!*

For Rudolf
München, Germany – 1979

Traces of Previous Lives

AUTHOR

The Supreme Master Ching Hai

TRANSLATION & EDITING

The SMCHIA Book Department
with guidance from the Author

GRAPHICS

Author's Photo: Due to Her love for all beings,
Supreme Master Ching Hai is wearing veggie fur in this photo.
Pages v-xi, 6, 10, 14-15, 16,
20, 22-23, 30, 34-35, 40, 42, 46-47,
50-51, 52, 56, 71, 72-73, 80, 83, 93
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International Association Publishing Co., Ltd.
No. 236 Songshan Road, Taipei, Formosa, R.O.C.
E-mail: smchbooks@Godsdirectcontact.org
Tel: 886-2-87873935
Fax: 886-2-87870873

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Supreme Master Ching Hai is a world renowned philanthropist, artist, and spiritual teacher. Gifted as a poet from an early age, She has long used Her unique creative powers to fashion beautiful and profoundly moving verses, which have been collected and published in numerous languages and set to music by some of America's finest composers.

She expresses both universal Truths and touchingly human feelings in Her writings, and through them has inspired countless souls to greater inner peace and spiritual understanding. Since Her earliest years, She has striven to alleviate the suffering of humankind through Her words and deeds, and Her poems reveal the wisdom gained through Her spiritual enlightenment and Her tireless devotion to the education and upliftment of others.

As the distinguished American music director John Barron states, "Supreme Master Ching Hai's life is an inspiration to the people of the world, especially those who have seen life's darkness. Her beautiful poetry, writings and wisdom bring joy and peace to those whose spirits cry out for sustenance."