

VIOLENCE, TYRANNY AND SUICIDE IN VIET'S AND TAY'S NOM POETIC STORIES: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE CASES OF TWO HEROINES IN THE TALE OF KIEU AND THE BIOOC LA FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE PSYCHE, SOCIETY AND CULTURE OF ETHNICITY

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Abstract: Suicidal behavior is phenomenologically conceived as the most individual fact but if putting it in a broad context, ie. social context, cultural context, is not so simple. Around individual behaviors there are always “others” who are attending and community labels attributed to individuals, forcing individuals to act. This perception was generally analyzed by the fact of heroines in two typical Nom poetic stories, The Tale of Kieu (Viet's Nom poetic story) and The Biooc La (Tay's Nom poetic story). The Tale of Kieu in Kinh's mind and the Biooc La in Tay's mind are stories that have profoundly influenced to community in the first place. In order to carry out a dissection of meaning of suicide in these two cases, if putting their life-world in social tyranny and cultural elements, characters in these two Nom poetic stories exist as entities penetrated to sorrow and shame. Their death was constructed as an irrevocable target. In deep structures, it reveals the signs of community pressure, of the collective psyche. In exploring and analyzing the above two cases, we also point out the fundamental differences in this meaningful event on the basis of cultural and psychological perceptions which are present as a center of ethnic consciousness.

Key words: Tale of Kieu; Biooc La; tyranny; suicide; cultural psyche of ethnicity; male-right society.

1. Introduction

The Tale of Kieu¹ is undoubtedly confirmed as the brilliant culmination of Vietnamese literature and culture (Dao Duy Anh, 1943, Phan Ngoc, 1985, Tran Dinh Su, 2005, Charles Benoit, 2016). It is both the result of the previous Vietnamese literary cultural quintessence and extensive influence in the Vietnamese community after its birth. The tale of Biooc La², for Tay people, is a “widespread”³ and widely accepted case in

qualities of being-in-the-world of the human condition. The way of putting the matter of beginning the story and ending of these two texts has many similarities. They

¹We rely on the English version of Dao Duy Anh (1989), Dictionary of the Tale of Kieu, 2nd edition, Social Sciences Publishing House, Hanoi.

²Chinese-Nom script Research Institute (2008) (transcribed and translated by Hoang Trieu An), General Collection of Vietnamese Nom poetic story, vol. 2, Social Sciences Publishing House, Hanoi.

started in the context of youth from the family came out of society, find love, swear couples. They exist in the condition of love at the early spring colored to full of blaze, passion. But they both realize that being-in-the-world, in the human condition is bitter, humiliating, painful to the sorrow. Life, if walking is in the storm

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the Tay community (Hoang Trieu An, 2008:9). The meaning of texts is mainly focused on two female characters Thuy Kieu and Biooc La. Behaviors, speeches, expressions of their attitudes are the expression of the

with many disadvantages, must sacrifice the individual, dream of themselves to ignore the social rotation. To live, therefore, is to gradually subtracts the individual toward what belonging to the family, the name, the status, the position, the object for sale and exchange, etc. Finishing texts are directed to the death of the protagonist. Thuy Kieu's death is envisioned as the repayment of a debt with the fate of the roost cheek: "*Remember the anticipation very clear / That is the end of life is here*" (Dao Duy Anh, 1989: 603). With Biooc La, death is a fierce resistance because parents are forced to sell ones whoe she do not love: "*If I will not be married with you, I will die*" into "*humiliatingly single yellow flower*" (Hoang Trieu An, 2008: 82; 84). In deep structures, these ways of ending the state of life reveal many traces of community mentality, traces of psyche, collective consciousness. In other words, what motivates the character to choose such an ending form? Is this form of closure personal or community expectations? And in the perception of Kinh's and Tay's psyche-culture, what are human ideas that suicides bring into? These issues are directly explained below.

³Biooc La in the Tay language is the name of a yellow flower (flower of toxic leaf, extremely poisonous). The anonymous author created the Nôm poetic story named the flower as the name of the character, a type of incarnation. According to Hoang Trieu An (2008), this figure in addition to expressed in the form of Tay Nôm poetic story, there are also Luon versions - folk songs, love singing of the Tay people. Thus, the figure Biooc La is not only present in the narrative story (form of seven worlds in each sentence), but also exist in the singing of love flowers. As for the Latin transcription of the Tay language, the word "Biooc" appears with two identities. 1/ Hoang Van Ma (2006: 29) transcribed into Bjooc, meaning flowers, like nà rùng pên bjooc: fresh face like flowers; bjooc coi: roses, etc. 2 / Hoang Trieu 2018 (An 2018) suggested that the transcription of Hoang Van Ma was inappropriate, which should be transcribed as "Biooc" in the same sense. In this article, we follow the transcription of Hoang Trieu An.

2. Research Method

Toward analyzing, comparing the problems of violence, repression and suicide in Viet's and Tay's poetic stories, through two cases of character, we put them in a whole context. The theory of ethnic culture

and total social space in G. Condominas (1997) and G. Evans (2001), is appropriate for identifying cultural and social elements related to individual perceptions and individual behaviors. Here, the overall view is put to the fore when evaluating philological issues of ethnicity. Our central manner is to place Nom poetic stories in a context of indigenous culture, in relation to the folk literatures of the two peoples. The context of the formation and development of the type of the Nom poetic story is marked by exchanges with the Han culture. Based on that, we attempt to understand and explain their particularities, relationships and influences to each another. The central axis of the article revolves around three elements, also the mark of the method that we implement is: documentation of Nom poetic stories (understood as a cultural element) - a psychological - anthropological model.

3. Finding and Discussion

3.1. Existence in deprivation of love, loss of honor and dignity - existence in violence

The central issue of these two stories is personal and love of couples, human happiness. But they happen in situations of tragedy, suffering, separation, chaos, etc. The main characters, the couples in the story demanded love and demanded a reward. In terms of personal values, this claim has a special meaning, that is the demand for those who understand themselves, know their value. Personal values only promote when they meet, meet the people they choose rightly, if they backward they will die.

The manifestation of man, of human condition through and by love is the most important manifestation of existence in life, the most human existence. Because, here, what is the most passionate and the most distressed are shown and, more importantly, through these two extremes, it speaks clearly of the deep structures of human soul life. Considering the cultural activities, festivals of the ethnicities of the lowland as well as the highland, factors of love, love markets, etc. Are always lively and attractively demonstrated. From a cultural, ethnical viewpoint of ethnicity, this is the theme of expressing the state of civilization, humanity and democracy of ethnicity, the core of ethnicity.

The life of her Biooc La is a free life, full of vitality, like a radiant kaleidoscope if it is a life that is free to choose her lover: *Biooc La she sad in heart / She cuts flower to give Luong Quan two branches / That Ngan bridge to the couple / Love to the childhood oath to remember / Do not leave the body of young women away / Flower withered you to send / Love each other do not forget*" (Hoang Quoc An 2008: 34). This is an important topic and interest of many ethnic groups in the highland and lowland areas (Nguyen Van Huyen, 2003, Nguyen Manh Tien, 2014).

The tragedy of the character is envisioned through the parts of life: the character of the girl is in the age of love, spring, walk the flower garden, meet people who agree, fell in love, vows to have each other forever, awarded a shirt to each other as a believer when separated (individual factors, individual aspirations), vow to live together "I and you should be a couple in the Buddha realm", if you leave me "our couple should be broken then when we died body should be thrown away the country" (Hoang Trieu An, 2008); but parents freely exchange their daughter with another person for money, status, because "parents pay attention to money" (factors outside the individual, family, society).⁴ The singing of liberal love of youth that forced marriage, suddenly turned into grief for the life of a wife without love, a lifetime of couples against the will. The character puts herself in the choice, living with love, with her life-chosen spouse; but the life of a married woman both awakens her own self-esteem and being the painful life that has been perceived before.

⁴According to research by Do Thuy Binh (1994), marriage and couples in the old Tay society are always based on the standard of class of the household, the status of the family. The girl at the age of getting married is often seen as "valuables" for sale.

The main characters in these two stories come out of society, the sense of "body" and "status" are developed in a new step. It is "one body", "alone" facing the harsh variety of life outside, the characters

are thrown into society as Nguyen Du called "strawberry tank". Thuy Kieu's "body" is the departure from the warm context of her previous home (her house, homeland) to enter a strange world, where she is a guest, must "run", ostracize in "other realms." Not only that, the evil forces in society are always in "companion" with the main characters. On the journey to seek personal happiness, fame to affirm their ego, they are always affected by the resistant forces, the ban. The "status" of living as people of Biooc La is expressed through the consciousness of the unwilling wife is visualized through the state of life "miserable", living in prison, damned.

3.2. Tyranny - existence in tear, humiliation

In the 775 verses with seven words in each sentence in the Tale of Biooc La, the image of "tears" reappeared 31 times. Obviously, this expression is bringing about a realization of the state of existence in the continuity of anxiety and depression. It creates complexes, psychological traumas. The story is told by filled tears: she shed tear before he did; two people burst into tears; tears fall in drops; the young woman in silence crying; remembering him with cries echoing continuously; alone she cried rolling in the garden scene; Biooc La's tears like rain water; young women's tears are like fog; tears poured down the cheek like rain; Biooc La crying with a sad face, etc. (Hoang Trieu An, 2008). This is not a simple repetition, but these series of words are the accusation of an obsessive existence in the mind. The manifestation of the world of life through and by tears is the result of the experience of suffering, humiliation in the extreme to the end of the human condition, a sad monster present in the mind. And in the feeling of the girl is "my parents married me to sorrow", "squeezed the phoenix with the owl into a couple" (Hoang Trieu An, 2008). The expression of the girl for her love is fierce: if her wish was not satisfied, she would find her way to death: *It seems that parents did not ask me / I stay temporarily to live a human life / See the pupil's face seems good / But very harshly plus evil, vulgar mind / I do not agree / I do not want to pair with this person / If parents squeeze me, I will die* (Hoang Trieu An, 2008:74). In this relationship, there is clearly no room for a harmonious choice.

In the Tale of Kieu, life, peaceful life only takes place in a short time. The main part of the story, the life

of the character is the experience of life - in/with - thunder - storm of life. According to statistics by Dao Duy Anh (1989: 403), living states (with the opposite meaning to death) are generally repeated 9 times⁵, but they are saturated with stiflingness (Dao Duy Anh, 1989): *living as wives throughout the world* (v. 87); *living on the strange land and dying in the strange countryside* (v. 890); *how to live a turky life equal to death in a clear state* (v. 1026); *now living or dead are in hand* (v. 1143); *living excessive too deluded to this extent again* (1960); *living excessive too then I was risky* (v. 2560); *did not know that life is fun* (v. 2613); *to live and die in exile* (v. 2675). The world of inhabiting in the way of feeling of the main character as a guest country, being alienated, living humiliated, living without death, living in torment, mental pain, etc.

Before deciding to jump into the river, a stream of painful consciousness about the fate appears. Awareness of the body: “the body hit by the waves and the sands”; “how the body like this”, “the body that knows the disadvantage is pity,” a life to the abundance; death is both “rob the parents” and “loss of intelligence”; concerned about the fate after death: “Where are birth and death that piece of bone given to?”, but more fiercely is still the reputation and the representative with Tu Hai: “That: “Take the merit to give me thanks / A little because the matter of nation should have to spare / Kill the husband but get married / Whatever face to remain standing in the world” (Dao Duy Anh, 1989: 604). Such awareness is directed towards human dignity. In relation to Tu Hai, it can be said that Kieu has the last place to raise hope for existence in the world. But in the perspective of being pressed to be married to the district officer, Kieu was stripped of all the pull in life. These things call forth death.

⁵In these nine repetitions, there is only one case that has a different meaning, we do not include, for example, v. 964: This is the result of the necessity/ Then robbing my husband vitally away. Dao Duy Anh (1989: 552). The bold place highlighted by the author of this article.

3.3. Existence by suicide

In the *Tale of Kieu*, describing the state of death, Nguyen Du did not use the word “death” (meaning

dying), but preferred to use the word “pass away”, repeated 12 times and twice using the word “sink” with the picture “sinking jewel” - referring to drowning beauty (Dao Duy Anh, 1989: 441), with the status of “passing away to become the ghost without husband”, “unjusticed death”, “death buried in the countryside”, “die clearly”, “living and death in exile”, etc.

The Thuy Kieu character⁶ has three attempts to commit suicide and one of them is to jump into the Tien Duong river to kill someone who is suffering a lot (the first time, “holding the knife she intended to die” when embarrassingly tricked by Ma Giam Sinh without pity of jewel, regret to scent. For the second time, when meeting with Tu Ba, she intended “to use a miserable knife to cut the string of fate” because she was aware of the painful humiliation; and for the third time, Kieu immersed herself, when she was forced by Ho Ton Hien to marry the village officer: *Kill the husband but get married, / Whatever face still standing in the world. / Well let die for it, / The heart to let on the heaven and in the river / Look to the immense water, / Bring body sown in the middle of the enormous river* (Dao Duy Anh, 1989: 604).

In the story of Biooc La, the character Biooc La loves Luong Quan. Being afflicted by parents to marry a person who has money, but no love, as she wanted to preserve her promise, faithfulness, etc., heroine Biooc La was found on the forest, eating yellow toxic leaves to commit suicide. Biooc La’s journey to death with toxic

⁶Through exploration of Nôm classical and popular stories of the Vietnamese people, we find that most of the characters (often regarded by the research community as positive characters, in the line of good) carry the notion of suicide and the central characters perform suicidal acts (mainly dead motifs (sown themselves) on the river and are saved by fishermen. Nguyen Quang Huy (2016). Limitation of human condition and suicidal motif in the Nôm classical story. *Journal of Science*, Hue University.

leaves was tearful in anxiety, melancholy, with fate blamed for having separated the couple. For couples in love, the recognition of life is expressed as the most

important element of life. If not satisfied in that world, the female character often chooses the most extreme solution: *All in four dimensions bothers to stay / I should not be coupled; Bee and butterfly with flowers to stay / I should not be coupled, then dead; Stream and the woods to stay / We in the buddha realm to visit the mundance* (Hoang Trieu An, 2008: 80). The concept of death is expressed very fierce: *Everybody always dies once / I will die leaving you* (Hoang Trieu An, 2008: 82); *One dead day on the high world to become peace / Do not want to be in the world of pain* (Hoang Trieu An, 2008: 36). With the Tale of Kieu, suicide was considered by Phan Ngoc 1985 as the challenges of the talent. Tran Dinh Su (2005) argues that these are “expressions”, because the actions of the characters are symbolic; the action itself is an excuse for them to express their world of mind. Both stories, either because of filial duty or love that cancels their body, send the body into the river, into the deep forest to integrity love and filial duty, dignity. Either chooses the worthy or self-destructive nothing, sacrifices the body to preserve the world of mind. This can be seen as a move of duty. On the other hand, they are also aware of the body in the state of clearness and ambiguity, the body of honor and humiliation, the living body is worthy of the quality of human life or not: *“Something is suffering and injustice continuously / Waiting for the end of life is nothing body”* (Dao Duy Anh, 1989: 604). Being aware of such a body is a new development of humanism (because previously only attention was paid to the soul, which forgets the fresh body) in the literature through a comparative view.

4. Conclusion and Suggestions

In the cultural perception, the stories are partly created with happy endings, showing balance of the female character (Vietnamese, Chinese mentality). In the story of Biooc La, the female character dies into yellow flowers that bloom late. Thuy Kieu jumped into a river but was salvaged by a fisherman. Yet, the progress of the story is a manifestation of the oppression of the male-right society that is imposed on women. In the context of Vietnamese and Tay people who inherited Chinese cultural influences, the traces of Confucianism such as respect for honor, prohibition of sex, and extramarital sexual practices were severely punished,

especially the kill, murder or homicide that brings back serious consequences threatens the status of women. Comparing Vietnamese and Tay people, Vietnamese behavior is more severe and destructive (Nguyen Manh Tien, 2014). These forms bear the hallmark of the realization of Chinese obsession, as the Southeast Asian world of the ancient Vietnamese was in the whole sexual liberation (Momoki, 2000, Nguyen Manh Tien, 2014). Based on the description of these two stories, setting the characters’ living statuses in consideration of body, status, honor, position, dignity, desire of society, of community, etc., it is clear that they are a coercive force, tyranny against the will of the individual. Thereby, death is both a consequence and the only right to express one’s voice. Death in the Tale of Biooc La of the Tay people is more personal, bearing more individual signs. Death in the Tale of Kieu of the Vietnamese is more influenced by the construction of the community, the society. Death takes place as the desire of the society rather than of the individual.

The pressure on the name, status, filial duty, friendship, virginity, and love always weighs on the woman’s shoulders. These are the constructs of the male-right society and are especially strict in the context of influenced by Chinese culture. The condition, the death in the Tale of Kieu, is therefore “labeled” as a repression of culture for individual behavior. Death, which is the “most personal” behavior, turns out to be happening in an overwhelming stream of consciousness: why die, how to die, die for what, die in humiliation or die of glory, death is personal or collective, die and then whrer to go, etc. means a series of deliberate choices of consciousness that mix both the secular world and the divine world that the community affords.

From a behavior of its own individual accord, with Kieu, the decision to jump into the river is completely social. Human fate refers to the individual, individual happiness, separating from social precepts, and at the same time propelling the fates to seek the life-world in another spatial dimension, in the extraordinary correlations. The mystery of the couple, in whispers of the couple, is towards the dream of happiness that is the most democratic part of the ethnicity, in its trials, to become tragic.

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CƯƠNG BỨC, ÁP CHẾ VÀ TỰ TỬ TRONG TRUYỆN THƠ NÔM NGƯỜI VIỆT VÀ NGƯỜI TÀY: PHÂN TÍCH ĐỐI SÁNH TRƯỜNG HỢP HAI NHÂN VẬT NỮ CHÍNH TRONG TRUYỆN KIỀU VÀ BÍOỐC LÃ TỬ GÓC NHÌN TÂM LÝ, XÃ HỘI VÀ VĂN HÓA TỘC NGƯỜI

Tóm tắt: Hành vi tự tử được hình dung như một sự kiện mang tính cá nhân nhất về mặt hiện tượng học nhưng nếu đặt nó trong một bối cảnh rộng, bối cảnh xã hội, bối cảnh văn hóa thì sự việc không đơn giản như vậy. Xung quanh các hành vi cá nhân luôn luôn có các "kẻ khác" tham dự - những nhãn hiệu của cộng đồng được dán nhãn cho cá nhân, buộc cá nhân hành động. Nhận thức này được chúng tôi tiến hành phân tích sơ bộ qua trường hợp nhân vật nữ chính trong hai truyện thơ Nôm tiêu biểu *Truyện Kiều* (truyện thơ Nôm người Việt) và *Bíóóc Lã* (truyện thơ Nôm người Tày). *Truyện Kiều* trong tâm thức người Việt và truyện *Bíóóc Lã* trong tâm thức người Tày là những câu chuyện có sự ảnh hưởng tới cộng đồng sâu rộng vào bậc nhất. Để tiến hành một sự bóc tách đến ý nghĩa tự tử trong hai trường hợp này nếu đặt thế giới sống của họ trong sự áp chế của xã hội và các yếu tố văn hóa, các nhân vật trong hai truyện thơ Nôm này hiện hữu như những thực thể thấm đẫm đau thương, tủi nhục. Cái chết của họ được kiến tạo như một cái đích không thể từ chối. Ở cấu trúc bề sâu, nó hé lộ những chỉ dấu về những sức ép của cộng đồng, của tâm lý tập thể. Khảo tả, phân tích qua hai trường hợp trên, chúng tôi cũng chỉ ra những khác biệt cơ bản về sự kiện nhiều ý nghĩa này trên cơ sở những tri nhận văn hóa, tâm lý hiện diện như là trung tâm trong ý thức tộc người.

Từ khóa: *Truyện Kiều*; Bíóóc Lã; áp chế; tự tử; tâm lý văn hóa tộc người; xã hội nam quyền.