

NATURE IN THE POETRY OF DU FU (CHINA) AND NGUYEN KHUYEN (VIETNAM)

Nguyen Hong Linh, Dr.

University of Education, Thai Nguyen University, Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

Tang poetry is a special poetic phenomenon of Chinese literature, including works that lasted throughout the Tang Dynasty, from the time Emperor Gaozu of Tang Li Yuan established the dynasty, until the collapse of the Tang Dynasty, a period of nearly 300 years (618-907). This is considered the golden age of Chinese poetry. In the Complete Tang Poetry published in 1707, there were 900 books, 30 volumes, and 48,900 poems by more than 2,200 poets of the Tang Dynasty. Tang poetry has a profound influence on Vietnamese literature, especially the absorption of the influence of authors such as Du Fu, Li Bai, Bai Juyi... Comparing the absorption of the influence of Tang poetry, China with that of Vietnamese poetry authors to clarify the absorption of the influence of foreign cultural and literary quintessence, and at the same time affirming the role and position of works imbued with the cultural identity of the Vietnamese nation is always a research direction of scientific and practical significance. Therefore, within the scope of this research, we will focus on comparing the theme of nature in the poetry of Du Fu and Nguyen Khuyen.

Keywords: Tang Poetry, Vietnamese Medieval Literature, Du Fu, Nguyen Khuyen, Influence, Reception.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Statement of the problem

Du Fu and Nguyen Khuyen are two typical poets who write about nature in two different countries. Through research, we have found similarities in the works of Du Fu and Nguyen Khuyen. Nature in their poems is a means of expressing the emotions of the authors. Both poets have worked hard in using the writing style of describing scenery to imply feelings. Besides selectively absorbing Du Fu's poetry, Nguyen Khuyen's poetry has shown creativity and affirmed a distinct and unique poetic style.

2. CONTENT

Vietnamese medieval poetry has absorbed the Chinese Tang poetry genre to apply to both literary and examination writing. Tang poetry was introduced into the Vietnamese examination system starting from the Giap Thin examination (1340) under the reign of King Tran Anh Tong. In the history of classical Chinese poetry, Tang poetry is the golden and magnificent period. In terms of themes, Tang poetry has made breakthroughs, the content is expressed in many aspects such as expressing thoughts, worries about world affairs, describing nature, chanting, exile... Vietnamese poetry also absorbed and reflected such content. Under the influence of Tang culture, many Vietnamese poems reflect the philosophy of Buddhism and Zen. Due to certain favorable conditions, Vietnamese medieval poetry has absorbed the influence of Chinese poetry to promote the strong development of poetry in Vietnam.

Du Fu and Nguyen Khuyen are two authors who lived in two different eras, but both conveyed their feelings through their pens, hidden in each sentence are pictures of the poet's personality. When reading Tang Luat poetry by Nguyen Khuyen, we can always feel the influence and color of Du Fu's poetry. We realize that life experiences have greatly influenced their works, their poetry has clearly depicted a Du Fu who yearned to contribute to the country all his life, but received misfortune and pain in return. Nguyen Khuyen spent all his youth devoting his efforts and talents to help the country and the people, but failed. And especially in the theme of nature, through research and survey, we also realized the influence of Du Fu's nature on Nguyen Khuyen's poetry. However, it is a selective reception, in each verse of Nguyen Khuyen's poetry still reflects a clear personal color, poetry still carries the strong Vietnamese national identity, typically the author has portrayed the picture of Vietnamese village scenery.

In the works of author Du Fu, the image of nature clearly shows the author's emotions, intentions and moods. Through the poem *Thu Hung*, the poetic image is created with its own unique characteristics:

Transliteration:

*Tung cuc luong khai tha nhat le,
Co chu nhat he co vien tam.*

Poetry translation:

*Khom cuc tuon them dong le cu,
Con thuyen buoc chat moi tinh nha.*

English translation:

*The daisy clump sheds more old tears,
The boat ties tightly each family's love.*

The author has very skillfully constructed the structure of the poem tightly, the language has many layers of meaning, all seem to reflect the author's mood. Expressing the pain, sadness, the feelings of a person in exile along with the longing, anxiety, and longing when remembering his homeland. He borrowed the image of daisy and the image of a boat to embody his own feelings. This is the uniqueness in his compositions with the way of expressing mood through natural images that are creatively depicted.

In Du Fu's poetry, the image of a boat in autumn is one of the common images to express feelings. The boat carries many meanings such as drifting, separation, freedom, and seclusion, but his poems mainly express the loneliness, sadness, and fear of the poet in his final years. Before the Tang Dynasty, there were not many poems expressing the image of wandering on a boat. After the Tang Dynasty, due to social instability and many other factors, the use of the image of a boat to create a feeling of wandering became extremely common, typically Du Fu. The small boat on the endless lake is like a wandering traveler in the vast world. The boat is helpless and drifts on its own. Similar emotions are also expressed in Du Fu's *Eight Happy Autumn Poems* (Part 1). The sentence "*Daisy blooms and the apricot blossoms will shed tears, the lonely boat connects to the heart of the homeland*", although only describing the trees and the lonely boat, it expresses the poet's sorrow. The poet does not run away from reality, but he looks straight at reality to reflect it. That is the reality of people suffering, surrounded, violently devoured, the suffering makes it impossible for them to escape.

As for Nguyen Khuyen, his reception was to use Tang poetry and the style of describing scenery and expressing feelings in his works, typically the poem *Thu Dieu*. The above literary reception was dedicated to describing autumn in the Northern countryside, through the images of

"autumn pond", "yellow leaves", "bamboo alley", "blue sky". The image of the boat also appeared in Nguyen Khuyen's work "A tiny fishing boat is lonely". All of which created the wonderful poetic beauty of nature. The creative point of the poem is that the author has put into the poem familiar, simple images, materials from the Vietnamese countryside to express the author's love for his homeland and country. Showing his concern for the times, he left behind the pursuit of fame and fortune to return to his homeland, maintaining a calm, leisurely lifestyle, keeping himself noble in the midst of the bustling, dark life.

Nguyen Khuyen was also very successful in depicting the picture of autumn. He composed many poems about autumn, typically the three poems *Thu Dieu*, *Thu Am* and *Thu Vinh*.

The poem *Thu Dieu*: *Ao thu lanh leo nuoc trong veo,*

Mot chiec thuyen cau be teo teo.

Song biec theo lan hoi gon to,

La vang truoc gio se dua veo.

Tang may lo lung troi xanh ngat,

Ngo truc quanh co khach vang teo.

Tua goi om can lau chang dang,

Ca dau dop dong duoi chan beo.

English translation:

The autumn pond is cold and the water is clear,

A tiny fishing boat is lonely.

The blue waves follow the slight ripples of the breeze,

The yellow leaves will be blown by the wind.

The clouds float in the blue sky,

The winding bamboo path is deserted.

*Leaning on the pillow, hugging the fishing rod for a long time
without success,*

Some fish are nibbling under the duckweed.

The poem is a picture of nature about a quiet, cold, lonely and sad autumn. The author conveys his feelings about the times, his love for nature combined with his love for the country and people. The image of autumn nature is expressed through the "yellow leaves", "bamboo alley", "clouds", "autumn pond", "stream of water", "wind", all creating a picture of autumn with a clear, beautiful scene that becomes vivid but imbued with sadness and loneliness. In the poem *Thu Am*, he wrote:

Nam gian nha nho thap le te,

Ngo toi dem khuya dom lap loe.

Lung giau phat pho mau khoi nhat,

Lan ao long lanh bong trang loe.

Da troi ai nhuom ma xanh ngat,

Mat lao khong vien cung do hoe.

Ruou tieng rang hay, hay chang may,

Do nam ba chen da say nhe.

English translation:

The house is small and low,

The alley is dark and the fireflies are flickering.

The fence behind is a pale smoke,

*The pond is sparkling with the moonlight.
Who dyed the sky so blue,
The old man's rimless eyes are also red.
The wine is said to be good, but not very good,
After five or three cups, he is already drunk.*

The poem *Thu Am* is the flow of emotions of a person who loves life, loves his homeland and loves his country. This poem describes the image of the Northern countryside, close and simple with the image of sparkling autumn. The image of "dark night", "smoke color", "moon shadow", the blue color of "sky", "red eyes" an autumn with many different colors. Finally, the poem *Thu Vinh*:

*Troi thu xanh ngat may tung cao,
Can truc lo tho gio hat huu.
Nuoc biec trong chung nhu khoi phu,
Song thua de mac bong trang vao.
May chum truoc giao hoa nam ngoai,
Mot tieng tren khong ngong nuoc nao?
Nhan hung cung vua toan cat but,
Nghĩ ra so then voi ong Dao.*

English translation:

*The autumn sky is blue in the high layers,
The bamboo poles are sparsely swaying in the wind.
The blue water seems to be covered with smoke,
The thin bars let the moonlight in.
The clusters of flowers from last year in front of the fence,
A sound in the sky from which country's geese?
I was just about to pick up my pen,
Thinking of it, I'm afraid of being ashamed in front of Mr. Dao.*

The poem *Thu Vinh* with its gentle, elegant colors, with its soft, graceful lines and the vast space, the scenery becomes magical. The natural images of "the blue autumn sky", "the bridge", "the cold wind", "the blue water", "the moon's shadow" create a romantic autumn scene. At the same time, it also shows the poet's deep feelings for his homeland and country. The poet has expressed his feelings in nature in a sincere way.

After retiring, Nguyen Khuyen returned to live a simple life in the countryside, thinking that he would be at peace and free from worries. However, the chaotic social life out there made him feel uncertain, lonely, and sad. Sadness and melancholy always appeared in his life as well as in his works. He understood and sympathized with the suffering and hardships of farmers.

Nature in the poems of Du Fu and Nguyen Khuyen are simple, close, and familiar images to people's lives. Images of ponds, boats, clouds, bamboo alleys, moon, wind, birds, autumn leaves, flowers, images, colors, and sounds in harmony between nature and people have created simple, close, and familiar beauty of the homeland and country.

The nature in the poems of the two men has similarities in their feelings of concern for the times. Du Fu is a poet of reality with his life full of hardships and sufferings. He uses images of nature to express his feelings. Du Fu closely combines natural scenery and personal experiences with the disasters of the times. In Du Fu's landscape and lyrical poetry, emotions, scenery and things are interwoven. Nguyen Khuyen is also a poet who carries within himself the pain of the

people, he is sad because of poverty, he is in pain when witnessing the loss of his country and home. By describing realistic images of nature, he contributes to expressing his love for nature and country and also expresses the author's sincere and deep friendship and family affection. At the same time, he also criticizes and expresses his indignation at the cruelty of French colonialism.

However, through the survey of the reception of this influence, it is not a complete similarity in the content of the composition, but comes from the common points in inspiration, poetics, and in each author, their poetry reflects distinct, unique colors. Nature in Du Fu's poetry has a deep realistic color. As a typical poet of the realistic pen, he does not focus much on depicting majestic, romantic, and magical natural scenes, but often focuses on describing the simple scenery, associated with the lives of the people. Besides that simple beauty, nature in Du Fu's poetry also has the color of fierceness and is tinged with sadness. It is these things that create the unique features in his poetic style.

The beauty of spring scenery is depicted in Du Fu's poems through warm sunshine and wind, mountains and forests of flowers and leaves, swallows flying in the mud and lovebirds sleeping on the sand. At this time, Du Fu was living in a thatched house in Chengdu, having a stable and comfortable life, unconsciously blending with all things. The scene before the poet's eyes was what he got from nature, and at the same time it was also a manifestation of his current state of life. The poem uses the words "beautiful, fragrant, flying, sleeping" to describe vision, touch (wind) and smell. From there, it creates a floating spring scene, making the reader's body and mind immersed in it, evoking an extremely peaceful scene in the mood of spring. The image of spring is also mentioned in the poem *Xuan da hi vu*:

Transliteration:

*Hao vu tri thi tiet,
Duong xuan nai phat sinh.
Tuy phong tiem nhap da,
Nhuan vat te vo thanh.
Da kinh van cau hac,
Giang thuyen hoa doc minh.
Hieu khan hong thap xu,
Hoa trong Cam Quan thanh.*

Poetry translation:

*Mua lanh biet duoc tiet troi,
Dang luc xuan ve ma phat sinh ra.
Theo gio hay hay vao dem toi,
Tuoi mat muon vat ma khong nghe tieng.
Duong que day may am u,
Thuyen tren song chi thay lua sang.
Som mai trong vung am uot do tham,
Hoa no day ca thanh Cam Quan.*

English translation:

*The good rain knows the weather,
It comes out when spring comes.
Following the gentle wind in the dark night,
Watering all things without a sound.*

*The country road is full of gloomy clouds,
The boat on the river can only be seen with the bright fire.
Early morning in the red wet region,
Flowers bloom all over the city of Cam Quan.*

Spring is a theme chosen by many writers and poets to include in their works, each author has a different style, expression and shows his own uniqueness. For Nguyen Khuyen, spring is an image that is both realistic and full of the style of the countryside. In the poem collection *Ngay xuan day cac con*, he wrote:

*Tuoi them, them duoc toc rau pho,
Nay da nam muoi co le ba.
Sach vo ich gi cho buoi ay,
Ao xiem nghi lai then than gia.
Xuan ve ngay loan cang lo lao,
Nguoi gap khi cung cung ngat ngo.
Truoc cua khoi day, non khuat bong,
Ben tuong mua it, cuc thua hoa.*

English translation: *Age increases, hair and beard grow gray,
Now I am fifty and three.
Books are useless for that age,
Thinking back on my old clothes, I feel ashamed.
Spring comes, the chaotic days become more and more careless,
People meet when they are together, also bewildered.
In front of the door, thick smoke, the mountain is hidden,
By the wall, little rain, few chrysanthemums bloom.*

The title of the poem talks about spring, spring is the season when trees and all things grow and flourish, beautiful but in the poem the spring weather is not favorable. Although it is spring, the spring sky is gloomy with “thick smoke” and “little rain” so the image of daisy only blooms sparsely, making the spring atmosphere sad and lonely. Since he retired from office and lived in seclusion, the sadness has been more and more endless, it is the sadness of an intellectual who lost his country.

Du Fu and Nguyen Khuyen are two typical poets who write about nature. There are similarities in their writings. We can see that nature in their poems is a means of expressing the author's own emotions (using the writing style of describing scenery to imply feelings). The images of nature in the poems of Du Fu and Nguyen Khuyen are simple, close, and familiar to people's lives. The thoughts and concerns about life, country, and worries about the world of the two authors are all conveyed in their poems. However, Du Fu and Nguyen Khuyen are not completely similar in their writings, but their poetry originates from common points of inspiration and poetics, but each author has his own color and characteristics. As a typical poet of realism, Du Fu does not focus much on depicting majestic, romantic, and magical natural scenes, but he often focuses on describing simple natural scenes associated with people's lives. Besides the simple beauty, nature in Du Fu's poetry also has a fierce and tragic color. It is these things that create the unique style of his poetry. In Nguyen Khuyen's works, nature is often familiar images of Vietnamese villages such as miniature ponds, bamboo alleys, mountains, fields, a patch of blue sky, a backyard garden... Nature in Nguyen Khuyen's poetry has a strong Vietnamese village character, which are realistic,

simple scenes and close to daily life. It can be said that Nguyen Khuyen's poetry is full of national colors.

3. CONCLUSION

The natural picture in the poems of Du Fu and Nguyen Khuyen are both extremely beautiful, vivid and rich in human values. Not only simply describing nature, both authors also convey their feelings, which are the secret, sacred love for the country and the deep love for the people of both authors. A comparative survey of nature in the poems of Du Fu and Nguyen Khuyen is evidence of the selective reception of literary culture, the reception in the spirit of creativity and the expression of the value of national cultural identity through Nguyen Khuyen's works.

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