

## HOANG CAM'S POETRY, SPECIAL ASPECTS ON THEME, TOPIC

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**Summary:** This article studies aspects of topics and themes in Hoang Cam's poetry. In which affirms the maturity of the author to confirm Hoang Cam's contributions to the appearance of Vietnamese poetry from 1932-1945.

**Key words:** Poetry, Hoang Cam, Special aspects about topic and theme

1. Up to now, Hoang Cam is known as a poet of Kinh Bac region, with highly appreciated poetic works such as *Dieu Bong Leaf, Across the Duong River*, ... but few people know that Hoang Cam is the author of most typical poetry in the period 1932 - 1945. These works were performed before the Revolution many times, but from 1946 up to now, few people pay attention to them. In 2005, Meritorious Artist Anh Tu decided to find the best poetic work of Hoang Cam to make a graduation thesis for his directing course and *Kieu Loan* - the poetic play of Hoang Cam once again revived on stage with the author's thrilling. His works have a perfect combination of poetic and drama in a flexible and harmonious way to create high value of artistic work, highly appreciated by professionals and audience.

2. Hoang Cam's poetry also takes events and historical figures as the theme of composition. But the special thing about Hoang Cam's poetry is that the selected stories and historical figures are highly tragic events. The nature of that event created strong conflicts between opposing forces in his poetry.

Hoang Cam has selected Vietnam's historical stories occurring in the feudal dynasties for his plays, with national defense wars and peasant revolts against the rotten feudalism. Surely it is not by accident that the author chose such a troubled period of history, because in fact Vietnamese social characteristics at that time were also full of similar sensitive fluctuations. As a poet with a patriotic heart and national pride like him, the choice of this topic is an artistic intentional. The poet *Nam Quan Hatred* is the image of the national hero - great poet Nguyen Trai, who had great merit in the resistance war against Minh invaders. The image of Nguyen Trai was built through a true historical detail: In 1407, the Ming dynasty invaded Dai Ngu. Ho Quy Ly and his son were captured and taken to Kim Lang. Several courtiers including Nguyen Phi Khanh were also arrested along with Ho Quy Ly. Nguyen Trai wanted to fulfil his filial piety, so he followed his father, but Nguyen Phi Khanh advised his son to return "to find a way to wash off humiliation for the nation, to avenge for father, that is filial piety". This detail selection has brought the patriotism and pride in national history and determination to fight against foreign invaders from two historical images Nguyen Phi Khanh and Nguyen Trai. As for *Kieu Loan*, the author reconstructed the history of Gia Long Nguyen Anh period, on the way to consolidate the monarchs, the emperor had to kill those who followed the old dynasty to destroy all threats. Nguyen Hue was a great hero but passed away, the court that he left behind was then corrupted and weakened by the greedy courtiers. Kieu Loan and her husband, each follow a different ideal, which lead to painful events. That is also the pain of the national history, there were periods that we wiping out foreign invader to regain peace, but conflicts arose and then a cruel civil war broke out. And suffer the same pain again, nobody else but the people and the country. As can be seen, Hoang Cam has put a loving heart into the poetry for the people and the country, even though the play was strictly censored by the French colonialists and prevented from performing right from its inception.

Hoang Cam's poetry is really the works of the national spirit and engages in it a secret patriotism through artistic images such as Nguyen Trai, Nguyen Phi Khanh, Nguyen Hue, The Old Man, The Cripple and Lady Kieu Loan ... The heroic image of the nation's history appears with precious qualities, lofty ideals, typically are Nguyen Trai, Nguyen Hue. The beauty of the hero in Hoang Cam's poetry is firstly portrayed through the beauty and quality of the

soul, making the character come alive and familiar. Nguyen Trai in *Nam Quan Hatred* is really a filial son, even though he escaped from his imprisonment, he still decided to go to Kim Lang to take care of his father in the last days of his life. These are very emotional and ethical feelings. Nguyen Trai stood in the midst of tragic anxiety between filial piety and loyalty. But in the end he chose the loyalty. Patriotism and national self-esteem are clearly depicted in the poet *Nam Quan Hatred*, especially in the separation moment of father and son, Nguyen Phi Khanh. The poem is soaked with tears of separation and pain, but also demonstrates the determination to take revenge. Nguyen Phi Khanh's foresight is also Hoang Cam's personal perspective on history. In the tragedy of the nation, the real hero was able to abandon his own love to realize the noble ideal of fighting the Minh invader and returning the peace to the nation.

*Phi Khanh:*

*Ah ! Nguyen Trai! Put away the love  
Look behind: blood and bones flooded the country  
Father gives birth, it means strength  
Father raise son, it's hope for the future  
Up to now, I failed in the halfway  
Oh, my child! Swing sword to forget pain!  
Go home, son! Your father farewell  
Go home, son! Avenge the nation  
Remember: You are the lineage,  
The heroic blood flows in your vein*

*Nguyen Trai :*

*One day, when Trai revolts,  
Raising the flag, waving my father's soul  
Wipe away the tears, I pray to heaven,  
One day, I will take back the country.*

In that tearful farewell, Hoang Cam even reconstructed the tragic scene of the nation before the brutality of the invader. He expressed pride in the indomitable heroic tradition of Dai Viet for thousands of years, still preserved in history books, that is the strength of the nation. Hoang Cam showed us the boiling hatred of Dai Viet people toward the Minh invader. It can be said that Nguyen Phi Khanh, Nguyen Trai, The Lady in the poetry are the images of the patriotic people that the author portrayed in the work:

*Oh! Pride is the youth pages  
From thousand years, did not lower the courage!  
Women and man in the mighty nation  
Have written by blood, by swords  
The magnificent history, like gold and jewels*

3.The image of a hero with patriotic inspiration not only appears in *Nam Quan Hatred* work but also in *Kieu Loan*, that beauty still appears after the praise of the poetic characters with a respectful attitude. Nguyen Hue is a man with great will and glorious feats, resounding the whole nation, glorious battles recorded in history books:

*The man who rumble four oceans  
Nation pride raise the flag and armor  
His eyes glowed with the stars  
Save the nation from the wolf claws  
Sweet fruit and flowers for the poor  
Singing songs for all the good people*

Uncompleted heroic work cannot resist the destiny, the hero leaves behind the country, leaving unfinished solstice and pain for all the people: *Who would expect the Tay Son mountain / fell to only a small mound of land.* The contradiction between great ideals and harsh historical realities has made this heroic image a tragic beauty.

Characters in Hoang Cam's poetry, most of whom are heroes in a tragic situation: some are locked in cribs and brought to Chi Lang to executed, some are evading enemies to looking for a master to build a great future fame, some are lies under the deep grave when the solstice has not yet become successful, and the fortune built up gradually dissolves into the air. The image of the fallen hero of Hoang Cam's poetry is also a common feature in the artistic point of view of romanticism in the literary period from 1932 to 1945.

4.Images of patriotic people are also portrayed by the author in a special way. These are the young woman in *Nam Quan Hatred*, Kieu Loan, The Old Man, and the Cripple in *Kieu Loan* poem. They are ideal supporters, passionate

about the ideal but also helpless against the reality of society. Especially in the *Kieu Loan* poem, the strong conflict between the two forces in society created a deep personal drama that could not be reconciled. Hoang Cam said: “The comparison between Kieu Loan and her husband, I do not mean to honor the righteous, denounce the reactionary, but portray the love tragedy and the tragedy of the ideal confrontation. Gia Long Nguyen Anhon the way to consolidate his kingdom, slaughtered those who followed the old dynasty to destroy all threats. Nguyen Hue was a very great hero but passed away, and the court he left behind was then ruined and weakened by the greedy courtiers. Kieu Loan and her husband, each follow a different ideal, which lead to painful events. That is also the pain of the national history in the past, there were periods we wiping out foreign invader to regain peace, but then conflicts arose and civil war broke out. Suffer the pain again, nobody else but the people and the country” (According to Hoang Cam - <http://daihoc.sankhau.dienanh>).

5. The poetic play has re-enacted the era atmosphere with a scene full of mourning and death, competing for the power of two feudal groups that tear down families, demolish the homeland. Through this social context, Hoang Cam implicitly expressed the suffocating atmosphere during the years of the Japanese fascist, causing countless mourning and death for our people. The image of Kieu Loan was inspired by the death of Minh Loan, a beautiful Hanoi woman at that time, who was harmed by the Japanese for political purposes. Hoang Cam's love for Kieu Loan really makes a true impression on the work (According to Hoang Cam on [vannghechunhat.net](http://vannghechunhat.net)).

The Poetry of Hoang Cam is also interested in building tragedies about love between couples with strong conflicts. Drama conflict mainly revolves around the opposition between the love of a couple and the ideal of life that the individual pursues. This tragedy deeply takes place and elaborately built by the author and with typical images are two dramatic characters: Kieu Loan and Vu Van Gioi. The couple loved each other honestly and shared the same ideals and great aspirations, wanted to follow Nguyen Hue's heels to build a flourishing dynasty. But in the end, the big dream failed because the Tay Son dynasty collapsed, the husband followed Nguyen Anh, leaving his young wife alone for ten years. The wife waiting in chaos and hopelessness for her husband. She became insane, wandered around the capital city of Phu Xuan and said things unfavorable to the court. Unable to openly eliminate that woman, fearing Vu Van Gioi (at that time is a general of the Nguyen Dynasty) was upset and possibly treasonous, Nguyen Anh sent a man to poison her.

The drama plot is not only the tragic love. Although two people love each other dearly, but the ideal of living completely opposite that has broken the family, a love that seems to be inseparable. The love of Kieu Loan and Vu Van Gioi is portrayed through her naive words:

*I miss him, his eyes crystal clear  
I look for him to the end of rivers and mountains  
Throughout ten years, how angry and sadness  
This tears fold many waves of Chau Giang?  
The day he left, he also wore this shirt  
Also the sword tied the pink ribbon  
Also fervent eyes, and voice  
Just pouring from the middle of the stream  
Also infatuation....”*

The love in Kieu Loan's heart is still unchanged. The memories of a loving husband still exist beside the sorrowful blame, the painful between love and hatred. She thinks that her husband is a traitor of love and noble ideal, and is eager to make a title for himself and forgetting the duty of husband and wife:

*He is a betrayal, he forgot me.  
I find him to the end of rivers and mountains.  
Throughout ten years, how angry and sadness  
I name my husband betrayal.*

Kieu Loan's pain is the pain of a woman who is betrayed in love and also the pain of a person whom belief is betrayed. With Vu Van Gioi, Hoang Cam also built up not only a talented general who absolute loyalty to Nguyen Anh, but also a husband who still gives his wife dearly love. He still remembers the couple's fondness memories since childhood, his wife's gratitude to him from the early ages and tries to save her from Nguyen Anh's prison:

*The more distant, the more love  
Early this day, youth remembered  
The old love is as deep as the earth core*

But besides love, the duty of husband and wife, General Vu is hold back by the Chinese courtiers. Conflict between love and loyalty to Nguyen Anh has made Vu Van Gioi fall into a tragic conflict: not daring to admit his

wife publicly, but wanting to save his wife from prison, wanting to have a happy life with his wife but does not want to give up the glorious dream. Hoang Cam not only created a conflict between the ideal of two opposing social forces, two people contradict each other on ideological views, but also created conflicts and contradictions within a person. These are contradictions that are not easily resolved and lead to the painful ending of the character. It can be said that when composing this poetic play, Hoang Cam spent a lot of effort in creating dramatic acts. The fact that Kieu Loan used the sword which is the engagement of the couple to kill General Vu and then committed suicide at the end of the poetry unbutton the knot for the drama. Before the imminent death, General Vu realized that it was too late. He realized that ten years of pursuing the dream of fame, in the end, made no sense. The play ends, they fall together into eternity.

Kieu Loan is an image of a beautiful woman, an ideal life, carrying a true love, but that love has brought a bloody and tearful tragedy. Quach Thu Phuong, a very successful actor as Kieu Loan, commented: "Kieu Loan is a typical Vietnamese woman. She likes to take care of her family. She loved her husband, and absolute faithful. But Kieu Loan is also a symbol of the dignity. That dignity does not accept being a slave to tyrannical dynasties that harm the people. Kieu Loan loves the hero named Vu, more than that she also idolizes him. But she had to kill him so she wouldn't have to see him doing wrong things any more. It is an act of despair to save love, to save a personality ... That moment was very tragic" (According to ngoisao.net)

6. Tragedy of love and ideal has become the biggest theme of Hoang Cam's poetry. But in Kieu Loan, we will encounter more profound life philosophies about human life that even in modern times still really make sense. The character's lines bring the philosophies of life that make Hoang Cam's poetry multi-meaning and really leave a deep aesthetic impression on the readers. Hoang Cam's poems reached the pinnacle of the poetic genre of this period in terms of artistic content value, bringing a voice with national spirit and noble human values.

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