

Textual Cohesion & Coherence in the Short Story "Tuong ve huu" by Nguyen Huy Thiep

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Abstract: This article approaches Nguyen Huy Thiep's short story "Tuong ve huu" (The Retired General) from an interdisciplinary perspective of text linguistics and literary studies, focusing on analyzing the system of cohesive utterances to identify their specific functions in constructing meaning, organizing the narrative flow, and expressing artistic ideology. The study employs a combined methodology, utilizing Hasan (1984)'s Cohesive Harmony Analysis (CHA) model to examine cohesive chains—specifically identity and similarity chains—and Tran Ngoc Them's theory of textual cohesion to analyze both form and content-based cohesive devices. The findings reveal that the cohesive system does not only ensure textual coherence but it actively constructs the tragedy of the protagonist, Mr. Thuan, a retired general who finds himself profoundly alienated and lost within the mundane reality of post-war civilian life. Through this analysis, the article affirms the significant value of integrating diverse theoretical models to decode the complex structures of literary discourse.

Keywords: Nguyen Huy Thiep, Tuong ve huu, text cohesion and coherence, CHA, short stories.

INTRODUCTION

"Nguyen Huy Thiep (1950-2021), born in Thai Nguyen, Vietnam was a unique phenomenon with a profound influence on Vietnamese literature during the Renovation period. With a minimalist, objectively cold yet highly evocative writing style, he sparked a linguistic revolution in the short story genre. In Đ. Đ. H (2010)'s opinion, his artistic world often intertwines the real and the surreal, harsh reality and shimmering myths, forcing readers to remain alert to decode the layers of meaning hidden behind his sharp, concise sentences. This characteristic makes his work a prime subject for research on textual cohesion and coherence.

Tuong ve huu, published in 1987 in *Van nghe* weekly, issue No. 20, by the Vietnam Writers' Association, is one of Nguyen Huy Thiep's most representative works. It earned him the State Prize for Literature and Arts in 2022 and was adapted into one of the most notable Vietnamese films of the 1990s. The short story is organized as the recollections of the narrator "I" about his father, Mr. Thuan—a general who, upon returning from war, finds himself alienated in the complex, bustling life of the suburban. This was a period of transition to a market economy, marked by manifestations of materialistic degeneration and loss of human compassion, all of which assaulted his ideals.

Linguistically, this text is a complex whole where cohesive devices function as "threads" connecting

fragmented slices of reality into a haunting narrative flow. Nguyen Huy Thiep employs extremely concise language, providing just enough information with a distinctly list-like quality, as seen in utterances such as: *"My father's name is Thuan, the eldest son of the Nguyen family. In the village, the Nguyen are a large family, perhaps second only to the Vu in number of men. My grandfather was a Confucian scholar who later became a teacher. My grandfather had two wives. The first wife died a few days after giving birth to my father, so my grandfather had to remarry. The second wife worked as a cloth dyer..."* These cold, detached sentences appear throughout the work, creating an aloof, objective tone that allows readers to make their own judgments—the writer neither directs nor judges anything. This reflects a postmodern spirit that elevates the reader to a higher position. Despite the widespread literary acclaim of *Tuong ve huu*, there remains a significant research gap in the systematic linguistic investigation of its internal organization. While existing literature extensively explores Nguyen Huy Thiep's works from thematic, cultural, or literary criticism perspectives, rigorous textual analysis using modern linguistic frameworks is still limited.

On this basis, the article poses the following research questions:

1. How is cohesive harmony utilized throughout the entire short story?

2. At key narrative nodes, how does the mechanism of cohesion contribute to character construction, the creation of moral tragedy, and the highlighting of the work's philosophy of life?

The article's contribution lies in combining a full-text survey (quantitative) with the analysis of representative cases (qualitative), thereby both ensuring data representativeness and clarifying the meaning-creating and artistic effects of cohesion in Vietnamese short stories.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of Textual Cohesion Research

In terms of definition and classification of cohesion, Halliday & Hasan (2014, p. 4) defined cohesion as a semantic concept which refers to the relations of meaning that exist within a text. The two writers categorized the kinds of cohesive tie into reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion. According to Tran Ngoc Them (1999, p. 14), the cohesion was classified based on traditional linguistic divisions, the contrast between established cohesive devices and newly discovered specific ones, or the degree of cohesion.

Research on textual cohesion and lexical cohesive chains is particularly significant in modern linguistics, as it provides the key to understanding how texts are organized and function at the level of meaning. If the sentence (utterance) is the basic unit of grammar, then the text is the basic unit of communication, and textual coherence cannot be explained solely by syntactic rules. Textual cohesion, especially lexical cohesion, creates continuity and thematic development through networks of semantic relations between lexical units. Lexical cohesive chains, therefore, are not merely surface-level word repetitions but mechanisms of structuring meaning, organizing semantic fields, maintaining and shifting themes, and shaping the global structure of the text.

The modern short story "Tuong ve huu" was selected as the data source because this genre is particularly well-suited for investigating the construction of lexical cohesive chains within the SFL/CHA (system functional linguistics/cohesive harmony analysis) framework. Firstly, the moderate length of the short story allows lexical "threads" running through the text to emerge clearly, enabling relatively comprehensive tracking of nuclear and satellite chains, as well as points of chain intersection—where the text "locks" its

structure and achieves cohesion. Secondly, this modern short story tends toward semantic compression, omitting multiple layers of information and increasing interpretive gaps; lexical cohesion thus assumes a stronger role in creating texture and maintaining thematic continuity, semantic fields, and imagery. Thirdly, from 1986 onward, experimental short stories have diversified their narrative strategies (minimalism, non-linearity, stream of consciousness, parody, symbolism...), facilitating the identification of different chain configurations such as concentrated dominant semantic fields, chain density by segment, or chain overlap as an indicator of discourse typology.

Models of Textual Cohesion

In modern linguistics, the study of meaning organization at the textual level has increasingly become a central approach in textual semantics and discourse analysis. If the sentence is considered the basic unit of grammar, the text is the basic unit of communication, where meaning is constructed and developed in relation to the context of use. Studies within the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework by Halliday & Hasan (2014, pp. 1-7) and Halliday & Matthiessen (2013, pp. 3, 43, 88) have shown that thematic continuity and development in a text cannot be explained solely by syntactic structure but depend primarily on mechanisms of cohesion and meaning organization throughout the discourse.

Among the resources for creating cohesion, lexical cohesion is considered the most important resource for maintaining and developing semantic fields, while simultaneously creating the thematic structure of the text through relations such as reiteration, synonymy, hyponymy, meronymy, and collocational relations. From the identification of individual lexical "ties," subsequent research shifted focus toward examining cohesive structures across texts, notably the concept of lexical chains by Morris & Hirst (1991), viewed as continuous lines of meaning that organize content and ensure discourse coherence.

Subsequent studies within the SFL framework, particularly Hasan (1984)'s Cohesive Harmony Analysis approach, have shown that textual coherence depends not only on the presence of cohesive devices but on the configuration of cohesive chains and the interaction between chains throughout the text. This opens up the possibility of examining the text as a dynamic meaning

structure, in which lexical chains operate as continuous "threads" maintaining and shifting themes across the discourse.

Among SFL-oriented studies, Ruqaiya Hasan's (1984) Cohesive Harmony Analysis (CHA) (Hasan (1984) in Flood (1984, pp. 205-206)) serves as a central model, because CHA shifts the analytical focus from "ties" to "chains"—the "threads of continuity" that function as an underlying structure of the text. In Hasan's common presentation, two major chain types can be distinguished: (a) identity chains (co-referential chains), primarily based on reference; and (b) similarity chains, primarily based on lexical-semantic relations. Cohesive harmony is understood as the overall configuration of chains and their interactions in maintaining themes, developing semantic fields, and ensuring discourse flow. Methodologically, CHA enables a shift from describing individual "ties" to describing "chain structure" and "chain configuration" at the textual level.

However, most theoretical models and empirical studies on lexical cohesive chains are currently constructed based on English and European language data, while languages of other typological types—particularly isolating languages like Vietnamese—have rarely been systematically investigated within this theoretical framework. Vietnamese, with its flexible word layers, heavy dependence on context, and tendency to develop meaning through associative networks, may exhibit significant differences in how lexical cohesive chains are formed and operate at the discourse level. To supplement cohesion theory in Vietnamese, Tran Ngoc Them (1999, pp. 20-24, 88-140)'s theoretical system, presented in *He thong lien ket van ban tieng Viet* (The System of Textual Cohesion in Vietnamese), was developed. In this framework (system), cohesion is identified as the most important factor transforming a sequence of sentences into a text. Based on the characteristics of Vietnamese, Tran Ngoc Them established a cohesion system comprising two closely interrelated aspects: content cohesion (thematic, logical) and form cohesion (repetition, linearity, substitution, association, antonymy). In particular, linearity plays an important role in organizing the sequence of events according to temporal and causal order.

Building upon Hasan's CHA theory of cohesive harmony and Tran Ngoc Them's system of Vietnamese textual cohesion, the authors of this article focus on applying these frameworks to

investigate and analyze the short story "Tuong ve huu" in order to clarify the role of cohesive devices in organizing the text and creating artistic effects.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs an interdisciplinary discourse analysis approach, combining text linguistics and literary criticism to decode the artistic structure of the short story "Tuong ve huu". The first step in the procedure is text segmentation, in which the entire short story is divided into the smallest analytical units—individual sentences or utterances. Each unit is systematically numbered for convenient data coding and cross-referencing throughout the text.

Next is the coding process, carried out by reading the text line by line (open coding) to identify cohesive chains and form cohesive devices. At this stage, each utterance is analyzed according to Theme-Rheme structure to identify the "point of departure" of the message and how information is developed, thereby clarifying the flow of information and the movement of the narrative thread. Identifying this structure helps distinguish the given (theme) from the new (rheme), providing a foundation for analyzing the thematic development of the text.

After data coding, the study conducts a quantitative survey to statistically measure the frequency of cohesive devices. These statistical results provide an important basis for identifying Nguyen Huy Thiep's dominant textual organization strategy. Typically, his style tends toward limiting explicit cohesive markers, instead enhancing semantic and logical cohesion to create a minimalist, "cold" tone that remains haunting and rich in discursive gaps.

The Cohesive Harmony Analysis (CHA) method is applied to construct identity chains focusing on central characters (tokens) such as Mr. Thuan or Thuy. Simultaneously, similarity chains of lexical fields such as military, family, and money are also established. The interaction between these chains (chain interaction) reveals the movement of the plot and the clash between different value systems.

Finally, the study conducts qualitative analysis at key narrative nodes, such as the scene where Mr. Thuan confronts the pot of bran cooked from fetal placenta brought home by his daughter-in-law, or the scene of the wedding of Mr. Bong's son, replete with "sordidness." Here, the study provides in-depth analysis of how the "threads" of cohesion (content and form) directly participate in

constructing aesthetic and psychological effects. This approach helps clarify the role of cohesion not merely as a technical device but as an artistic strategy that silently creates meaning, highlighting the work's philosophy of life.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Content Cohesion

Because the author's point of view (focalization) lacks internal description, character dialogues serves a special function. It is extremely concise, acting as a mean for announcing stances and ideologies, and possesses the nature of "ideological events". For instance, when Mr. Thuan tells his son, "The great task of my life has finished," the son merely replies, "Yes." This curt response is devoid of interaction or empathy. Similarly, when Thuy sees the chaotic guests and remarks, "This cannot be," no one offers a rebuttal. At the wedding, when Tuan's friend performs a

dreadful solo and Mr. Thuan subsequently makes a speech, everyone just listens to themselves. The character like Mr. Bong often talks only to himself, with no one responding.

The language in the story is the language of the events themselves; their opposition and clashes create meaning. While the protagonist is a retired general, he is not the only "general" in the narrative. According to Su (2014), there is another "rising general": Thuy, Thuan's wife and the retired general's daughter-in-law. "General" Thuy is a general of the market economy era. She possesses the intelligence, shrewdness, and sharpness to seize opportunities and recognize her father-in-law's outdated ways. Nguyen Huy Thiep demonstrates great acuity in decoding the "bourgeois cultural code"; "Tuong ve huu" vividly portrays the money-obsessed urbanites of the post-1975 period.

Cohesive Harmony and the Tragedy of Mr. Thuan (CHA Model) Identity Chain (IC) Analysis

Table 1: Statistics of the Identity Chain (IC) for the Character Mr. Thuan

Token Type	Specific Manifestations in the Text	Distribution Characteristics and Meaning
Proper name	Thuan, ong Thuan (3 times)	Direct identification of the referent
Relational/Status nouns	Cha toi (my dad, 105 times) (S1, S4, S9...), cha minh (my dad, 2 times) (S3), cha (dad, 18 times), ong (he-9 times)	Reflects the narrator's (son's) and other family members' perspectives on the retired general, tracing the protagonist's journey
Military rank	Thieu tuong (major-general)	Emphasizes professional identity ingrained in his being, "that was his phylosophy for living"
Pronouns (in dialogue)	Toi (I, self-reference), anh (Mr. Bong addressing him as 'brother'), bac (elder uncle)	Shows direct interaction and the social status of Mr. Thuan in various relationships

Comment and discussion: The IC chain appears densely in the opening section when Mr. Thuan has just retired, helping maintain the theme throughout, stabilize the point of view, and reinforce the symbolic network of the work. The story "Tuong ve huu" is narrated in the first

person, with the narrator "I" telling the story from an objective perspective. According to Hasan, the IC chain performs the function of realizing the context of situation (Hasan, 1984, in Mood (1984 pp. 205–206)).

Similarity Chain (SC) Analysis

Table 2: Similarity Chains (SC) for the Character Mr. Thuan

Chain Name (SC) – Semantic Field	Representative Lexical Items	Artistic Meaning
Military and Discipline	<i>Identity/Ideal</i> : "great deeds in life," "that is phylosophy for living," admiration, command, chaotic flags; <i>Battle memories</i> : joined the army, guns and bullets, war, rank of major-general, colonel, barracks, military cloth, military zone commander, battlefield, going to the front, sacrifice, moldy flour, dreams, "buried three thousand men"	This chain portrays Mr. Thuan as a symbol of a glorious past, maintaining solemn discipline even when these concepts have become "obsolete" in his daughter-in-law's eyes
Alienation	<i>Psychological states</i> : bewildered, long absent, restless,	Reflects the psychological state

and Tragedy	pensive, "too uncomfortable," dislikes (swearing), says nothing, not happy, chilled, crying, silent, terrified, pained, alienated; <i>Disrupted actions</i> : cried (looking at the bran pot), trembled (at the wedding), skipped passages (when reading his speech)	of a "stranger" in his own home, precisely in the suburban life after retirement, heralding spiritual collapse
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Table 3: Interaction Between IC + SC Chains for Mr. Thuan

Interaction Type	Specific Example	Aesthetic & Ideological Effect
IC + Military SC	Thuy said: "Father is a general, retired he is still a general", My father went to battle; he commanded that battle.	Affirms an indelible identity, creating conflict when "general qualities" confront raw "worldly qualities"
IC + Tragedy SC	"My father cried" when confronted with the pot of bran cooked from fetal placentas; IC: My father, major-general, host of the wedding. SC: Flustered, suffering, trembling, terrified, pained (at Mr. Bong's son's wedding)	The crux of the tragedy: The horror at evil committed in the name of wealth, marking the failure of an old value system in the face of the market economy. The solitude of old value systems: Through the figure of FATHER, these negative emotional chains are tightly linked to Mr. Thuan's reaction to a reality that is "nonchalantly mundane" yet profoundly "corrupt." The impotence of military order before urban life: This interaction reveals that the old general is completely "defeated" when his meticulously prepared speech is drowned out by "vulgar musical accompaniment" and the "absurdity" of the youth.
IC + End of Life SC	He sacrificed himself when going to the battlefield, "demanded to go to the front" at old age	Resolution of tragedy: He truly finds harmony only when returning to the "military chain"—where he truly belongs

As we can see in the table 3, through the interaction between the General character and the SC chains above, it becomes clear why Nguyen Huy Thiep titled his work "Tuong ve huu". The General represents faith, governance, an order

established under real authority. When this no longer exists, it means the loss of human faith, and when that foundation disappears, people in that world become selfish, base, pragmatic, and cruel.

Cohesive Harmony and the Tragedy of Thuy (CHA Model)

Table 4: Statistics of the Identity Chain for the Character Thuy

Token Type	Specific Manifestations in the Text	Distribution Characteristics and Meaning
Proper name	Thuy	Used when introducing the character and in some direct forms of address, identifying the individual entity in the narrative flow
Relational/Status nouns	Vo toi (my wife) (most frequent token, 68 times), me (mother) (daughters calling her), mo (aunt) (Mr. Co, Ms. Lai calling her), chi Thuy (Sister Thuy) (Mr. Bong calling her), vo may (your wife) (Mr. Thuan calling Thuy when speaking to his son)	Shows her position; appears second most frequently after Mr. Thuan in the story. These status nouns shows the dominant position of Thuy in the family.
Pronouns (in dialogue)	Toi (I) (Thuy referring to herself), em (Thuy addressing her husband)	Expresses a strong personal identity, the initiative and confidence of a modern woman, "living in the new way"

As we can see from the table 4, Thuy's IC chain appears most densely in sections related to family management, economics, and decision-making

moments (such as preparing for the funeral, lending money, raising dogs), showing that she is the one who holds real power in the household.

Similarity Chains (SC) for the Character Thuy

Table 5: Statistics of the Similarity Chains for the Character Thuy

SC Chain Name – Semantic Field	Representative Lexical Items (Tokens)	Artistic Meaning and Discourse Role
Economics and Management	Managing finances, controlling, supporting (Mr. Co, Ms. Lai), spending, dog business, large profits, lending, depositing, finances, saving, three thousand, two thousand, tens of thousands, calculating (calculating exactly for each tray), paying wages	This chain defines Thuy's identity as a "manager," a "general" in everyday life—clear-headed, decisive. It shows that Thuy holds real power, coordinating all activities based on economic efficiency, in complete opposition to Mr. Thuan's "egalitarian" ideals
Medicine and Coldness	Doctor, maternity hospital, abortion, fetal placenta, ice flask, stockpot, medicine, ginseng, old, virgin, chicken stewed with lotus seeds	Reflects her profession and "new way" worldview, pragmatic to the point of cruelty. The interweaving of specialized medical terminology with items denoting raw survival creates a chilling "texture," expressing an objective perspective bordering on coldness toward life and death

Chain Interaction

Cohesive harmony is created when components of Thuy's IC chain interact with components of the SC chain through experiential relations.

IC (Thuy) + SC (Economics) Interaction: Thuy (IC) is the one who manages/controls (Actor – Action) expenses/business (Goal – Objective). This interaction constructs the image of a powerful woman who runs the household like an economic machine.

IC (Thuy) + SC (Medicine/Coldness) Interaction: My wife (IC) performs the action of putting fetal placentas (Action) into an ice flask (Goal) and bringing them home for Mr. Co to cook for the dogs and pigs (Goal). When discovered by Mr. Thuan, Thuy asks Mr. Co: *"Why didn't you put it through the grinder? Why did you let him find out?"* This interaction creates a moment of high dramatic tension, where medical pragmatism and Thuy's coldness directly clash with Mr. Thuan's old humanitarianism, expressing the moral degeneration of the younger generation under the influence of the market economy, in contrast to the aged general's sense of "alienation."

IC (Thuy) + IC (Other characters) Interaction: Thuy interacts with Mr. Co/Ms. Lai through a provider-dependent relationship; with Mr. Bong through a strict/deposit-demanding relationship. These interactions reinforce the textual characteristic of a society where emotional

bonds have been replaced by contractual and monetary relations. "General" Thuy is a "general of the market economy era". She possesses the intelligence, shrewdness, and sharpness to seize opportunities and recognize her father-in-law's obsolescence. She knows how to exploit Mr. Co and his daughter's misfortune, transforming them into domestic servants for her family.

Through CHA, the character Thuy emerges not through lengthy psychological descriptions but through a network of pragmatic, coldly sharp lexical cohesive chains. Thuy is the factor creating a new "texture", the term used by Diệp Quang Ban (2008) for the household—a texture operating according to economic and scientific logic, where life and death are both calculated in terms of "numbers" and "meal trays."

Analysis of Cohesive Devices at Narrative Nodes

"Tuong ve huu" has a fragmented structure, composed of multiple fragments of memory, recollection, and present events. Nguyen Huy Thiep extensively employs repetition and linearity to create a "cold," restrained yet haunting tone. Linearity connects events from Mr. Thuan's retirement to his departure, creating a relentless causal logic about the decline of a traditional moral family.

Scene of Mr. Bồng's Son's Wedding – Chapter 4 (Sentence 119-163)

Analysis of Textual Cohesive Devices in the Wedding Scene

Analysis of the textual cohesive devices in the wedding scene of Mr. Bong's son in Nguyen Huy Thiep's "The Retired General" helps clarify the conflict of "textures" between different value systems. Below is a detailed analysis based on Tran Ngoc Them's system of five formal cohesive devices.

Repetition in this passage plays a role in maintaining the point of view and emphasizing the conflict of life philosophies. The method of appellative repetition is evidenced by terms such as "cha tôi" (my father) (S144, 150) – ông (he) (S145-151); these are repeated to stabilize the narrative subjects within the chaotic flow of the wedding. Furthermore, the text features lexical repetition of objects and states, with the reappearance of tags related to the "cravat" (S138-139), "borrowing" (S139-140), "money" – "us" – "chicken" (in the song lyrics) (S143), and "songs" (S142-143). Words denoting "fluster" – such as "terrified" (S141), "dreadful" (S143), "skipping sections" (S150), "shuddering" (S151), and "panicked" (S153) – highlight the unstable mindset of those representing the old order. According to Tran Ngoc Them (1999, p. 92)'s theory of cohesion, lexical repetition has the capacity to imbue a text with precision, clarity, and tightness. Additionally, the phenomenon of syntactic repetition, as seen in "Filter cigarettes, but exhausted near the end of the party" and "Fifty tables of food, but twelve remained" – where function words are repeated – demonstrates a high degree of cohesion between the two utterances.

Nguyen Huy Thiep employs linearity to connect fragmented segments of reality, creating a relentless logic of the general's "defeat." The sequence of events unfolds continuously: from preparation (borrowing a tie) → the wedding space (vulgar) → entertainment performances (song about money) → the failure of Mr. Thuan's speech → ending in terror. This sequence requires no explicit connectors yet still creates a haunting narrative flow, showing the gradual encroachment of vulgarity into Mr. Thuan's world.

Substitution diversifies the discourse and provides additional evaluative nuances about the characters. *Substitution for* "Mr. Bong" – "he" (S157-158), and "Tuan" (S143, S159) – "the groom" (S138), "the bride" (S153), "Kim Chi"

(S155), "daughter-in-law" (S158), phrases such as "đám cưới ngoại ô" (suburban wedding, S134), "sự ô hợp láo nháo" (chaotic mishmash, S152), all refer to the wedding context, expressing the narrator's critical and chilling perspective.

Associative relations weave a sharply contrasting cultural context within the wedding. *Semantic field of "Vulgarity & Chaos"* embraces a collection of tokens such as *lố lăng* (gaudy), *bậy bạ* (improper), *nhảm nhí* (nonsensical), *ô hợp* (motley), *láo nháo* (disorderly), *thô thiển* (crude), *ô trọc* (sordid). These words create a chilling "texture" that surrounds the protagonist. *Semantic field of "Military & Standards"* includes tokens such as *tướng* (the General), *chủ hôn* (wedding host), *môn đăng hộ đối* (well-matched families), *chuẩn bị công phu* (elaborately prepared). The interaction between these two semantic fields creates the dramatic node: the powerlessness of discipline before the raw life of the urban populace.

Antonymy is the most important cohesive device for constructing the deep meaning of the passage, revealing profound paradoxes. The sacred music "Ave Maria" contrasts with the "horrific" solo about money ("Money, hurry into my pocket"). Mr. Thuan's "elaborate preparation" contrasts with the clarinet's "very improper accompaniment" and the children's "nonsense." The once-illustrious general on the battlefield now becomes "flustered," "trembles," and is "terrified" before a "placidly mundane reality."

Through the coordination of these five cohesive devices, Nguyen Huy Thiep portrays the wedding scene not merely as an everyday event but as the narrative node of tragedy. The cohesive system has "woven" the image of an alienated general, one who completely fails to reestablish his order of honor before the harsh and sordid transformations of post-war society.

The Scene of the Daughter-in-law Thuy's Aborted Fetus Stockpot – Chapter 5 (From Sentences 164-178)

The second prominent narrative node is the scene of the aborted fetus stockpot in Nguyen Huy Thiep's short story "Tuong ve huu," which helps clarify the texture conflict between old and new value systems.

Repetition is the most frequently used cohesive device in the excerpt, creating a continuous thread and a haunting emphasis. Repetition of appellation (lexical): The repetition of appellations such as

"cha tôi" (my father) (2 times, S164, S174), "tôi" (I) (3 times, S164, S166, S173), "vợ tôi" (my wife) (2 times, S168, S178) creates a continuous "thread," maintaining the narrative flow and the first-person narrator's point of view. This also reveals that the confrontation in this scene is between two characters: Mr. Thuan and Thuy. Besides, the words "thai nhi" (fetus) (2 times), "phích đá" (ice flask) (2 times), and "đàn chó" (pack of dogs) (2 times) are repeated, forming a lexical cohesive chain that circles around the most haunting detail. The appearance of "thai nhi" in both the introduction (daily routine) and the climax (inside the stockpot) connects the "ordinary" everyday with the "horrificing" that is exposed.

Linearity in this part is expressed through the organization of events in a sequence with increasing tempo, like hammer blows to the reader's emotions: Introduction of the issue (Mr. Thuan speaks) → Revelation of the truth (daily collection of fetal placentas) → Exposure of the current situation (I knew but ignored it) → Climax (my father leads me to the kitchen, points at the stockpot) → Violent reaction (my father cries, throws the ice flask, curses) → Open ending (Thuy questions Mr. Co). Without needing many connectors, the sequence of events is arranged according to a strict causal logic, leading the reader from surprise to horror, and finally to a feeling of coldness and deadlock before Thuy's ruthlessly cold apathy.

According to Tran Ngoc Them (1999, pp. 114-121), substitution helps diversify expression while ensuring cohesion, simultaneously revealing the attitudes and perspectives of the characters. Initially, the neutral phrase "rau thai nhi" (fetal placenta, S169) – a medical term – is used. Later, it is substituted with the more gruesome and concrete phrase "các mảnh thai nhi bé xíu" (tiny little fetal fragments, S172). This change is not merely a different way of speaking but reflects a shift in perspective: from an inanimate medical product (in Thuy's eyes) to a painful, human entity (in Mr. Thuan's and the narrator's eyes). Throughout the excerpt, the character Mr. Thuan is substituted with pronouns or phrases such as "ông" (he/him) and "cha tôi" (my father). This alternation both avoids mechanical repetition and keeps the subject of action clearly identified in the reader's mind, especially when actions occur in rapid succession (leading downstairs, pointing at the stockpot, crying, grabbing the ice flask and throwing it).

Associative relations help create opposing semantic fields. The words in the excerpt are organized into two majors, opposing associative fields, creating the core conflict of the scene. Associative field of "Life/Humanity" like "thai nhi" (fetus), "rau thai nhi" (fetal placenta) evoke associations with nascent life, with a humane, sacred perspective. The scene "cha tôi khóc" (my father cried), "rờn rợn" (chilled/creeped out) evoke emotional reactions of a human being toward the event, belonging to the world of feeling and morality. "Nồi cám" (stockpot), "cho chó, cho lợn ăn" (feed to dogs and pigs), "máy xát" (grinder) evoke associations with the material world, of raising animals, production, and consumption. The way "aborted fetus" is handled is the same as handling a byproduct in a production chain. This shows Thuy's economic-market-oriented behavior and her loss of moral compass in the new era. The interweaving and collision between these two associative fields create the "rờn rợn" (chilling/creepy) feeling that Mr. Thuan experiences.

Antonymy helps depict the conflict of values. This is the most important cohesive device, clearly revealing the opposition in how characters perceive things, thereby creating drama. Contrast in speech happening in Mr. Thuan's emotionally charged exclamation – "Khốn nạn! Tao không cần sự giàu có này" (Damn it! I don't need this wealth) – stands in complete opposition to Thuy's pragmatic, cold question: "Why didn't you put it through the grinder? Why did you let him find out?". This reflects the conflict between, on one side, morality, humanity, and outrage at the insult to life (the old conception), and on the other, efficiency, technique, and concealment to maintain economic activity (the new conception). Besides, contrast in action occurs in Mr. Thuan's actions of crying and throwing the ice flask, expressing helplessness and rebellion, however, Thuy's actions (through her words) are concealment and calculation. Thuy's reaction further highlights Mr. Thuan's alienation within his own home. Finally, contrast in attitude taking place in the narrator's reaction "I fell silent" is completely different from his father's violent reaction, showing how deeply apathy has taken root.

CONCLUSION

The combination of multiple theoretical frameworks affirms that cohesion in Nguyen Huy Thiep's prose is not merely a technical device but an artistic strategy. The cohesive devices

(repetition, linearity, substitution, association, antonymy) have woven a tightly structured textual "fabric," where every word contributes to portraying the collapse of an old value system before the harsh transformations of everyday life. The work demonstrates a tightly woven "fabric" of cohesion, creating meaning through the application of Hasan's CHA model and Tran Ngoc Them's theory of textual cohesion to the analysis of textual cohesion in Vietnamese, particularly in the genre of Nguyen Huy Thiep's modern short stories.

However, this study still is limited due to some gaps. Firstly, it requires a deeper analysis of the cohesive threads through more visual representation tools to illustrate the results. Secondly, it needs more comparative and contrastive study between an English short story and 'Tuong ve huu' to highlight differences using CHA and Tran Ngoc Them model.

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