

From England to Vietnam: Tragic Love Stories Across Cultures

ABSTRACT

This research explores the important connection between literature and culture through comparing two stories: Vietnam's legend of *My Chau -- Trong Thuy* and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. The similarities lie within the settings, the situations, times or the endings; the differences are investigated based on their historical contexts, symbols and characters. By comparing the two works, including the variety within and between cultures, traditions, perspectives as well as how those elements influence the stories we discover elements of 'pure love' across time and space. Moreover, our research reaffirms other social science research that claim stories play an important part in fulfilling spiritual needs for people in the modern world.

Introduction

In modern society, when people's material needs are met, the need to search for spiritual culture is inevitable (Little, 2014). In order to meet this spiritual need, people tend to rely upon their customs, traditions, primitive beliefs, or even origins (ibid). Folk beliefs have always been a land containing many mysteries, evoking curiosity and interest in discovering those ancient features as they bring people back to their ancestors and the spiritual values of their nation. Studying the cultural elements in stories is also a way to bring us back to our cultural roots.

Culture, besides having its significance, offers people values that reflect the beauty of lifestyle and generally even a deep belief in some mystical world. The existence of traditions, beliefs, and customs helps people in society to have a more complete awareness of morality and social mores, and at the same time, a deeper view of our ancestors and cultural narratives. This paper will focus on comparing the Vietnamese legend of *My Chau Trong Thuy* (Nguyen, 1905) and the English quintessential love tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* (Shakespeare, 1947). The comparison attempts to explain why the differences between the texts exist to reveal how cultural elements contribute to the stories. Moreover, and perhaps unexpectedly, the research reveals that concepts of 'pure love' that are typically only associated with Victorian era ideals and altogether excluded from the 'Asian tradition' until the 20th centuries are present even in the renaissance eras in Europe and the Warring States periods in East and Southeast Asia (Stearns, 1993).

Even though the stories come from different places and have different backgrounds and geographies, they share many important details in common. The similarities may appear in the settings, the situations, or even the endings. However, because the stories were born in two unique times and places, there are differences within the parallels. I explore the likeness and the disparities, the variety in cultures, traditions, perspectives as well as how those elements influence the stories will be explored. Stories can serve as a tool to preserve cultures and to help the next generations learn from their ancestors (Christine, 2012). Seeking to uncover the reasons behind the similarities and differences promotes intercultural awareness and helps us better understand our shared narratives and themes across humanity and at different ages.

In order to achieve the goal of the research, the analysis encompasses elements inside and outside the stories. This paper will also include definitions, historical contexts, and a brief summary of the two stories: *Romeo and Juliet* and *My Chau Trong Thuy*; then, break down the symbols and the four characters. The research includes the relationship between the stories and the beliefs and perspective at the time, in particular in 208 B.C when the second dynasty of Vietnam formed, and of the late 16th century Renaissance in England. Ultimately a comparison of the text as well as extra-textual analysis reveals that the ideas of 'pure love' exist well before the 20th century 'Victorian' period.

Definitions

A folk tale is a story with origins rooted in what is coined as an oral tradition. This means that the story has been orally passed from one generation to another. Since folk tales rarely have written accounts, the story can have added or eliminated elements as they are retold from the perspective of a particular teller. Today, folk tales have already taken a written form. Because *Romeo and Juliet* by Shakespeare was inherited from *II Novellino* by Masuccio Salernitano, elaborated upon later, also is considered a folk tale (Francisco, 2017).

A fairy tale is a story, which is usually intended for children, that features magical characters such as fairies, elves, wizards. The term "fairy" seems to refer more to the wonderful and magical setting or fantastical influence in a story, rather than the presence of the character of a fairy in that story. While most fairy tales are written stories, some have been passed down verbally from generation to generation. Vietnamese fairy tales are often traditional; many were passed down from one narrator to another before being recorded in the books. And because it contains magical details, *My Chau Trong Thuy* perfectly fits this definition of fairy tale (ibid).

A fairy tale takes its roots from oral tradition but involves magical creatures. While a folk tale derives its story from real-life phenomena, fairytales are made up. Simply put, a folk tale is a story with a basis in true-to-life events, while fairytales are works of fiction (ibid).

Context

In the Northern region during the semi-mythical Hong Bang period (2879 - 258BC), there were Au Viet tribes, living interspersedly with the Lac Viet people. At the end of the third century BC, Qin Shi Huang (founder of the Qin dynasty), who had long targeted the Vietnamese country, sent his military in an attempt at dynastic expansion. Although the leader of Au Viet was killed in the fight, the people of Au Viet and Lac Viet still refused to surrender. They then decided to elect Thuc Phan as a general. After the victory of the resistance, in 207 BC, Thuc Phan proclaimed himself as King An Duong Vuong, merged Au Viet and Lac Viet into Au Lac country, based his capital in Phong Khe, and built the Co Loa citadel (present day Dong Anh, laying just outside of Hanoi, the current capital).

Though there have been several versions of the story of My Chau, the legend of *My Chau Trong Thuy* is said to exist in two books dating from the Tran Dynasty: *Dai Viet su luoc* and *An Nam Chi Luoc*. Later on, the story of My Chau – Trong Thuy with the image of goose feathers is earliest found in *Linh Nam Chich Quai* - a book of legends and myths (Le, 2012). The date of this book is uncertain, but it is believed to have been compiled near the early Le So Dynasty, most likely during the Ming Dynasty (1368 - 1644 AD).

According to the legend, My Chau leaves goose feathers for her lover and betrayer Trong Thuy to follow, eventually leading to their mutual demise. The goose feathers coat serves as proof of the custom of using goose feathers to make clothes and blankets. Every year, during the My Chau festival, Co Loa people often avoid killing geese. According to Dang Van Lung, a researcher from Vietnam, the goose feather coat comes from Vietnamese bird totems. Birds are a winged species that represents the upper world and the sun. Therefore, the element of My Chau's goose feather coat joins with the custom of sun-worshipping practiced by bronze age Vietnamese.

Romeo and Juliet was not originally created by William Shakespeare. More than a century ago, in 1476, Italian author Masuccio Salernitano wrote a book *Il Novellino* about an affair, murders, exile, and about a priest who is willing to help to arrange the wedding of a young couple from two hostile families. In 1530, Luigi da Porta also recounted a love story that ended with the lovers committing suicide in the city of Verona.

In 1562, an English poet Arthur Brooke used this theme in his long collection of poems *The Tragical Historye of Romeus and Julius*, which speaks of a secret love defying their parents and the law. William Shakespeare wrote the tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* in 1596. The play contains a message about the story of hatreds and conflicts occurring in the royal family, from King Henry VIII, Queen Mary Tudor, to Queen Elizabeth I, causing thousands of murders, bloody killings between factions of Catholics and Protestants (Clunie).

An Duong Vuong was the king of Au Lac country and was helped by the turtle god Kim Quy to build the Co Loa citadel. After the construction was completed, the turtle god gave him a claw to make a magic crossbow, which was so powerful that it had helped the king defeat the enemy and protect the citadel in many fights, including ones with Nam Hai, the neighboring country. Refusing to accept the loss, Trieu Da, king of Nam Hai, sent his son, Trong Thuy, to propose to My Chau—An Duong Vuong's daughter. After living together for a while, Trong Thuy inquired about the magic crossbow and with her trust and love for her husband, My Chau showed Trong Thuy the crossbow. Knowing the secret, and using the excuse to visit his father, he switched the magic crossbow with an imitation one and brought the original back to Trieu Da. Having the magic crossbow in hand, Trieu Da attacked Au Lac again. Because An Duong Vuong typically relied on the protection of the magical crossbow, he was not prepared. Losing the battle, An Duong Vuong rode his horse and brought My Chau forward to the sea. But wherever he went, the enemy followed. The king asked the god Kim Quy for help; the god appeared and said: "The enemy is behind the king." An Duong Vuong, enlightened that his daughter was the source of betrayal, immediately drew his sword, killed My Chau, and then jumped into the sea to his death. When Trong Thuy discovered the body of his former wife, out of extreme pain he ended his life by jumping down a well.

Over fifteen hundred years later, in Verona, Italy, the Montague and Capulet families maintained a long-standing enmity. Romeo was the son of the Montague family, who fell in love with Juliet - the daughter of the Capulet family in the ball at the Capulet mansion. Against their families, the couple went to the church to ask the priest Laurence to arrange a secret marriage for them. However, Juliet's cousin Tibal killed Romeo's best friend. To avenge his friend, Romeo stabbed Tibal to death and was banished and exiled. Juliet was then forced to marry Count Paris. She asked for help from priest Laurence. The priest faked her death for 24 hours by giving her a dose of sleeping pills. Then, he informed Romeo to come to the crypt to save her and escape together. But before the priest could explain the plan to Romeo, Romeo already heard of Juliet's death and fled in pain to Verona. On the way back, he bought poison to prepare for his suicide. At the cemetery, Romeo stabbed Paris to death and then drank the poison to commit suicide. As soon as Romeo died, Juliet's medicine wore off. She woke up and saw Romeo's body next to her, so she took a knife and killed herself. The tragic death of the young couple awakened the two families from their long-standing feud.

Argument

After their meeting at the ball, both Romeo and Juliet were filled with grief. When their eyes met and their hearts were in sync, the two souls had belonged together. While they shared the same feeling for each other, their love was hindered because of their families' feud. Therefore, in the garden of Capulet's house, they lamented together under the moon.

Their first meeting took place in a truly magical setting. The night was late, the moon was bright, the flowers were fragrant. Romeo crossed the high stone wall, entered the garden, and headed for the door of Juliet's room. Juliet reached out from the balcony to confess her feelings. From the overarching image of Juliet, which Romeo describes as glorious as the sun, Shakespeare cleverly let Romeo's train of thought focus on her beautiful eyes by transitioning:

“She speaks, yet she says nothing. What of that?”

Her eye discourses;”

Her sparkling eyes made Romeo think that she was saying something. In the moonlit scene, Romeo compared her eyes to the two most beautiful stars in the sky.

Images of the sun and stars are used to focus on expressing the dazzling and brilliant beauty of Juliet under the eyes of Romeo. This portrait of Juliet is proof of their innocent, sincere love (QuackieHels, 2013). The allure of the moonlight is the basis for the development of this pure love. The beauty of the setting does not allow the lovers to think badly about each other or prevents bad thoughts from entering and destroying the beauty. In other words, the pure love of the young couple makes the long-standing hatred of their families meaningless. However, while sharing the same dreamy light of the moon, the love between My Chau and Trong Thuy was not that pure and simple. After Trong Thuy's proposal, An Duong Vuong let him live in the citadel as he respected the love his daughter had for her husband. Having lived together for a while, My Chau's trust for Trong Thuy increased. And there came a full moon night, together, they sat and talked. Taking advantage of the glamorous scene, Trong Thuy gently probed about the magical crossbow with My Chau and suggested seeing it. With her love for her husband and the effect of the sentimental surroundings, not only did My Chau show him the crossbow, but she also explained to him what it was made of and how to use it.

In both cultures, the moon becomes the symbol of romance and love (Loske and Robert, 2018). Therefore, the moon plays an important role in creating such a romantic atmosphere, making people forget about reality and only see beauty. Under the moon, all the hatred seems to be cleared, all the anxiety or fear seems to be taken away. In 'Romeo and Juliet', this image has performed its function in developing a scenery to convey a pristine love of the couple as it erased the barriers between them. In contrast, appearing in *My Chau-Trong Thuy*, the moon is taken advantage of because the love between the two people was arranged from the beginning to achieve a purpose. As a result, the influence of the moon just touched My Chau, who possessed the honest feelings of love for her husband.

If only there were no barriers to hinder that love, perhaps Romeo could have been dignified in front of Juliet to express his feelings. With him, happiness and love were too fragile. Finding love was hard, keeping it was even harder. But Romeo's mood was rather simple. He fell in love and was willing to accept whatever the cost might be. As his feeling was reciprocated with love, as he felt her heart, he definitively affirmed his love by willingly giving up his family and his surname:

“I take thee at thy word.
Call me but love, and I'll be new baptized
Henceforth I never will be Romeo.”;
“My name, dear saint, is hateful to myself,
Because it is an enemy to thee.
Had I written it, I would have torn the word.”

Romeo wanted to deny the hatred between the two families because they were enemies of love. Did the Feud do anything other than bringing suffering?

Facing Juliet's worry and torment not only for herself but also for her lover, Romeo's attitude was more drastic. He was ready to give up his family, showing the courage to sacrifice to love (Appelbaum, 1997). What Romeo feared was not winning the love of Juliet, the fear that she would look at him with hateful eyes:

“There lies more peril in thine eye than twenty of their swords.

Look thou but sweet,

And I am proof against their enmity.”

For the heart that first felt the vibration, at the moment he saw the eyes of his lover, all dogmatic morality became meaningless. He even called his own family "them" as they were strangers to him. Now, in his mind, Juliet is his life, "I have overcome this thanks to the wings of love."

Living in Au Lac following his father's sinister scheme, Trong Thuy did not marry My Chau for love, but for the purpose of using her to carry out a political plan and to complete the spy mission entrusted by his father. And in the name of an enemy's son, Trong Thuy has successfully completed his role. He took advantage of the gullibility of My Chau and deceived her to steal the magic crossbow. Before returning to his country, Trong Thuy asked My Chau a question with the aim to know how to find her, as well as the king if he fled. It is these actions that directly caused the tragedy of a country and of a father and his daughter. He was the enemy of the Au Lac's people, a man who deserved to be unmasked, condemned, and eternally guilty. But regarding his special position, Trong Thuy had to shoulder tasks that cannot be granted to ordinary people. He 'had' to marry My Chau and 'had' to stay in the neighboring country to find a chance to steal the magic crossbow. Trong Thuy's situation and position are the basis for explaining his treacherous nature.

In contrast to Romeo, Juliet's mood is more thoughtful and cautious. After just having met Romeo at the ball, Juliet went back to her room, stood by the window, overlooked the garden in the quiet night, and with the thought that there was no one around, she uttered her own feelings out loud. Her words directly confessed her desirous love without any concealment of shame: “Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love, and I'll no longer be a Capulet.” Juliet's monologue represented tormenting anxiety, a torment expressing a troubled state of mind in the face of difficult circumstances. Juliet's monologues show that her love was burning. An exclamation phrase "Ay me" was used, but it not only showed the pent-up emotions that cannot be expressed in words, but it also contained a sign of anxiety, for two reasons: the hatred between the two families, the worry of whether Romeo really loves her (Brown, 1966).

These lines show the maturity of Juliet's thinking, from self-analysis to commitment: "Tis but thy name that is my enemy. " Juliet's way of asking questions was very innocent, earnest, and pure. She questioned herself, and found a way to answer: "What's in a name?", and then proposed solutions: “Romeo, doff (remove) thy name.” She

suggests a way that can be said to have expressed a passionate love: "And for that name, which is no part of thee, Take all myself." The answer affirmed that there was no alternative.

And when she no longer thought about the Montague family, Juliet thought about her own Capulet family and asserted that the place where the two were talking was "the place of death" that "If any of my kinsmen find thee here. ", "If they do see thee, they will murder thee." Juliet was aware of the walls separating their love: the stone wall of the garden, the wall of enmity between the two families that she did not know whether Romeo dared to overcome, and the wall of uncertainty about Romeo's true love. The inner development of Juliet is much more complex than Romeo's, but it is also consistent with the psychology of the lover. The torment in her emotion shows the heavy pressure of the situation, the siege of the long-standing enmity between the two families, and the danger that threatened the two. This reflects both the maturity in her thinking and the passion in her emotion (Appelbaum, 1997).

My Chau, who was the daughter of An Duong Vuong, was a noble princess with a pure, gullible, innocent soul. Appearing in the latter part of the story, she was the one who had to take great responsibility for the lost tragedy of her country. She was a beautiful and innocent princess, but had no sense of civic responsibility, political consciousness, and was only immersed in love and conjugal affection. My Chau was so naive and gullible that she arbitrarily used the national secret for her love, causing the treasures of the country to be swapped without her knowing, and only thinking of her personal happiness, she marked the way for Trong Thuy to chase. When evaluating this character, there have been many different opinions, critics, and advocates (Tran, 2015).

My Chau, in some perspectives, is criticized as the direct reason for the loss of the nation, however, we need to consider her role as a woman at the time (ibid). My Chau was a mild-mannered girl who loves and commits to her husband with all her heart and mind; therefore, she is more pitiful than guilty. My Chau's action of showing Trong Thuy the magical crossbow and sprinkling the feathers illustrates the stereotypical emotional reaction of women. These actions stand for the love culture of Vietnam, which contrasts with the reasoning culture of the invaders (Le, 1966). However, not only was she a woman, but she was also a princess. And a princess who only knew how to fulfill the traditional role without caring about the fate of her country and her people is considered guilty (Tran, 2015). The detail of goose feathers is clear evidence for her blameworthiness. The fight went off when Trong Thuy just returned to his, but still, My Chau was light-mindedly sprinkling the feathers of her coat to guide Trieu Da's army. After all, her love for Trong Thuy was a blind one.

The naivety of My Chau, the lie of Trong Thuy, the passion of Romeo, and the maturity of Juliet are influenced by the period of time that they were born. Coming from the feudal period when people had to endure the traditional perspective and judgment of other people, My Chau and Trong Thuy had to carry out their roles in the families or society. Regarding My Chau, according to the feudal ethics, she was judged in three ways: at home, she was subordinated to her father; after her marriage, she was subordinated to her husband; and after the husband's death, she had to follow her son (Tại gia tông phụ, xuất giá tông phu, phu tử tông tử). This is the reasonable explanation for her complete reliability and trust in her husband. And as for Trong Thuy, all of his actions were very alert and decisive, so everything was completed according to his plans. Stealing the magic crossbow, Trong Thuy and his father, Trieu Da, marched their troops to capture the Co Loa citadel. It was also his decisive and cold action that completely cut off Trong Thuy's emotional relationship with My Chau. In the role of a son and a prince, Trong Thuy had successfully completed the task assigned by the king, his father. But besides being a hero who has merits in expanding the country, Trong Thuy, as a husband, was a sinister, opportunistic man who was willing to take advantage of his wife's feelings and beliefs to carry out plans for his benefit.

Regarding Romeo and Juliet, William Shakespeare was a typical author of European literature in the Renaissance period. Living in the transitional period from feudalism to capitalism, he quickly captured the breath and pulse of the times and incorporated them into his works. Therefore, Shakespeare's writing career is a reflection and criticism of both regimes. In his art, Shakespeare always spoke out in praise of people and demanded their right to life and to be free. His characters are new people of the new era, people who live with their hearts, who dare to raise their voices to express their aspirations, to overcome all hatreds and social ties (Cain, 1947). Romeo and Juliet represent such people. The Renaissance art movement, born around the 15th century, awakened people's aspirations,

promoting individuals, and affirming that people are the noblest. Prince Hamlet, the protagonist of the play Hamlet, had an immortal statement about man:

‘What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! In form and moving, how express and admirable! In Action, how like an angel in apprehension, how like a God! The beauty of the world, the paragon of animals—and yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me— nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so.’

This statement is the spiritual continuation of Protagoroth, the ancient Greek philosopher: "Of all things the measure is Man", is the general idea of humanism in ancient Greek literature. It is also the main idea of Renaissance literature. As the typical author of English Renaissance literature, Shakespeare deeply expressed this thought in his work (UK Essays).

My Chau also has three cultural symbols: the name My Chau, the goose feather coat, and the pearls. "My " has the same meaning as "me," which means mother in Vietnam (This is a way of naming by gender). Also, "My" was not taken from "thuy mi" (modest) but from the hope for prosperity. "Chau ", according to the researcher Dang Van Lung, sounds similar to "chúa", which means king or god. "Chau " therefore associates with a festival of Co Loa ancient people: the festival of the goddess who protects the rice farming. Through the above analysis, we can affirm that the precursor of My Chau is the goddess of water. My Chau's blood turned shellfish into pearls comes from a motif: My Chau was born from water, and then came back to the mother of water.

The Capulet family forced Juliet to marry Paris, the grandson of the King of Verona. She pretended to accept the arrangement but then asked the priest Laurence for help. He gave her a sleeping potion that was effective for 24 hours; at the same time, he sent a person to go to Mantua to inform Romeo to return. However, the epidemic was raging at Mantua, so the messenger had to return. Soon, Romeo received the news that Juliet was dead. He immediately rode back, carrying poison. At the Capulet family crypt, Romeo unexpectedly met Paris. The two men rushed to fight, and Romeo eventually killed Paris. Thinking that his lover was dead, Romeo drank the poison and committed suicide. When Juliet regained consciousness and saw that Romeo was dead, she took Romeo's sword to kill herself. In the wake of the couple's tragic deaths, the two families erased the long-standing enmity. Eventually, they created a golden statue to honor and remember the love of Romeo and Juliet.

At the end of the play, both Romeo and Juliet died but the freedom of their love and happiness remained forever. Because of his love for Juliet, Romeo did everything to make her happy (Applebaum, 1997). He crossed the high walls of the Capulet house, which also represents the grim darkness of medieval enmity. This long hatred is a cruel cut that weighs heavily down on the couple who were in love and ready to sacrifice. Their death, therefore, is a wake-up call for respect for the freedom of happiness and love. In a dark and cold circumstance, their passion and emotion warmed their love, brought breath and vitality to the soul as it is pure love.

Also, as a traditional part of Renaissance life, Romeo and Juliet's deaths were the result of unresolved contradictions of the times. In other words, to deal with the conflict, Shakespeare came up with a solution to sacrifice his ideal characters, because contemporary social evils such as family feuds and feudal cults were not easy to erase. Therefore, he was forced to borrow the death of the couple to "kill" a legacy of medieval feudalism (N.T.M.L, 2006). The sacrifice of two people changed the mind and the hatred between the two families as a result of their grief for the passionate love of Romeo and Juliet. And the statue has partly made their dream of being together a reality. Moreover, the deaths of Romeo and Juliet marked the triumph of the humanist ideal.

When the enemies arrived at the citadel, the king brought his weapon out, but nothing happened. He urgently got on his horse and with his daughter behind, he rode out the back door. Contrary to her father's attempt, My Chau sprinkled the goose feathers from her coat along their path as she had promised. Days of running passed, but the enemies were still getting closer. When reaching the cliff, An Duong Vuong hopelessly prayed to Kim Quy god to help him. As he made his vow, the turtle appeared, warning him that the enemy was right behind his back. The king understood the Godly epiphany and killed his daughter before jumping into the ocean.

My Chau committed an unforgivable sin as a citizen of a country and died by her father's sword. My Chau has paid for her guilt, her justice needs to be dissolved. Her actions were unintended. When she heard the judgment

of Kim Quy god, she did not pray for pardon but begged to be forgiven for her blunder: “If I had intended treason and plotted against my father, I would be turned into dust when I died. If I was fooled because of my loyalty, I would die becoming pearls to clear the feud.” As the sword of the father swung, the blood of the girl flowed into the ocean, and the shellfish which ate it changed into pearls. Her words became reality, and the injustice is vanquished.

As for Trong Thuy, in the wake of the death of My Chau, he suffered in regret, and as a result, jumped down the well to commit suicide. The image of the well is also a mirror reflecting the sins of Trong Thuy. And that he gave up his throne and wealth to jump into the well allows us to infer his repentance, grace, and above all, his love for his wife despite having remained loyal also to his father. Trong Thuy is the essential son of filial piety.

According to legend, when people wash the pearls with water from that well, the more they wash, the brighter the pearls become. Through that detail, the hatred in My Chau's heart is believed to have been resolved. In their previous lives, My Chau and Trong Thuy were two unfortunate people in two different worlds, but they accidentally got caught up in that cycle of love and then fell into tragedy. But in the end, no one was worth blaming, as those two miserable people had to carry their responsibility. In this life, they had suffered and paid enough, so they died with the hope that in the other life, they can live together, without any resentment or hatred. Additionally, My Chau and Trong Thuy's death raises a warning to the reality of wars, reflecting the relationship between the destiny of nations and the happiness of individuals.

At first glance, the deaths in *Romeo and Juliet* and the deaths in *My Chau Trong Thuy* appear completely different: one is voluntary in the face of forbidden love, the other is approved but intentional, but the two loves result in the same ending: their deaths. They are the deaths of true, eternal yet unfortunate love. But they did not die meaninglessly. They died to clear the animosity between the two families and above all, to prove their extraordinary love and their willingness to sacrifice for their lovers.

From these tragedies, which come from two different cultures, we see that romantic love between humans appears in any land and any period of time. Perhaps there is nothing that can hold back this kind of emotion as it can bring the purest, innocent yet powerful feeling that has the ability to break long-standing feuds. The love between humans is unrestrainable and therefore, in both cultures, love is featured and appreciated. And through the stories, the statement that it is everyone's right to pursue their love and happiness without any restrictions and prohibitions is proclaimed.

Limitations of the research

This research has to be seen in the light of some limitations. First, the research only lasts for two months. As a result, to meet the deadline of the project, this paper can not include every perspective and theory. Second, in *Romeo and Juliet*, only two scenes of the stories were included. As the goal of the research is to point out the cultural impacts through the similarities and differences between the stories, this paper focused narrowly on certain parts of the text.

Some scholars may disagree with the pure love of *Romeo and Juliet* and argue that their love is a selfish one. Their actions were based on their own will and what they thought was the best. At that time, their love had a great impact on their families' names. What would people think when Capulet's daughter married their enemy's son? Therefore, it was one of *Romeo and Juliet*'s responsibilities to maintain the reputation of their family.

Conclusion

As seen in the comparison between *Romeo and Juliet* and *My Chau Trong Thuy*. By comparing certain scenes, such as the moonlit night, the personalities of characters, and the circumstances of their deaths, this study showed that even when *Romeo and Juliet* and *My Chau Trong Thuy* come from two distinct cultures and periods of time, they share similarities in terms of plot, as well as moral lessons. However, the two tales are different in terms of the attitudes of the characters towards love and the motivations behind their actions. This contrast is explained by the cultures themselves, the period that the stories were born of and the perspective they are influenced by. Stories play

an important part in fulfilling spiritual needs for people in the modern world. Therefore, future research into how cultures shape stories should be carried out to draw a clearer picture of the connection between culture and literature.

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