



Indirect Influence in Literature: The Case of Edgar Allan Poe, Charles Baudelaire, and Han Mac Tu

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ABSTRACT

From the perspective of “new aesthetics,” a trend of post-theoretical criticism, this paper looks back at some of the achievements of Influence Study (French school) in comparative literature, in particular those who are quite similar to the works of Jean-Marie Carré and Marius François Guyard. The two research areas mentioned above share a concern with the emotion of a text as well as its effect and transmittability. Bearing this in mind, this paper studies the indirect influence of Edgar Allan Poe on Han Mac Tu (Vietnam) through the intermediary Charles Baudelaire and considers the chain of “affective contagion.” This is a case of interesting and complex indirect influence cited by the critic Hoai Thanh as early as 1942 in Vietnam.

摘要

从后理论思潮新美学理论研究的视角，本文对比较文学影响研究，特别是卡雷与基亚所在的阶段进行梳理和重新认知。从而探索新美学理论与比较文学影响研究的共同之处，既文学文本中的感情问题及其对解码文学文本的效率与传播机制。在此基础上，本文考察埃德加·爱伦·坡通过夏尔·皮埃尔·波德莱尔对越南诗人韩墨子 (Han Mac Tu) 的间接影并将其看作为情感传播链来推理，研究。从埃德加·爱伦·坡到韩墨子韩墨子如二十世纪初越南著名文艺理论批评家怀清(Hoai Thanh)所言，是一个既十分有趣又非常复杂的影响研究案例。

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The paper stems from discussions raised in Isobel Armstrong’s *The Radical Esthetic*, a work situated in post-theory criticism. In this work, Armstrong restores the role of a text’s “emotional effect,” which many critics today, especially male ones, appear to despise to the point of elimination. Armstrong’s thinking is quite close to that of Lev Tolstoy, who framed the standard of art as its “affective contagion.” These ideas also serve as important links to identify cases of *direct influence* and *indirect influence* in literature. As such, it is possible to distinguish a case of indirect influence from Edgar Allan Poe to Han Mac Tu¹ through the intermediary Charles Baudelaire. This is a case of interesting and complex indirect influence cited by the critic Hoai Thanh as early as 1942 in Vietnam.

“Influence study,” with names like Fernand Baldensperger, Paul Van Tiegem, Jean-Marie Carré and Marius François Guyard involved in French comparative literature in

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the first half of the 20th century, has long been viewed as outdated, with literary influences becoming an increasingly complex phenomenon not capable of being contained by any single theoretical framework. Ihab Hassan, an Egyptian-born American critic, harshly criticizes the principle of “influence” in comparative literature as “inaccurate” and “ambiguous.” Since the mid-1990s, it has been viewed as an imperialist and Western hegemonic research approach for its study of non-Western works only through translations that often favor an Orientalist perspective.

“Influence study” gradually lost its central position to the development and explosion of contemporary literary theories in the 20th century. In particular, the emergence of post-structuralism and its challenge to the very nature of deconstruction became the basis for influential movements in criticism such as postcolonial criticism, feminist criticism, and ecocriticism among others. Many scholars doubted and cast judgment on the field of comparative literature that fit within the framework of “influence studies” such as that which Fernand Baldensperger, Paul Van Tieghem, and others laid out. Indeed, “influence study” was later overwhelmed by the younger “parallel studies,” followed by a subtle combination of the two research areas above, many trends in comparative literature stem from this combination, such as the recent “variation theory of comparative literature” or the “juxtapositional model of comparison.”

However, the supremacy of theory came to a standstill and even experienced a regression, with many critics expressing their opposition to theory by the end of the 20th century. In *Reading After Theory* (Blackwell, 2001), Valentine Cunningham acknowledges with relief that theory “had run its course,” with him starting “*the process of repairing aspects of criticism which theory had damaged,*” and giving them back their proper places within literary studies, rather like someone starting to tidy up after a flood of theory (HTM italic) (Barry 242). In the emerging post-theory critical movements, “new aesthetics” shows a clear challenge to contemporary criticism. It works in contrast to the main trends of literary theory that dominated from the 1970s onwards. Nearly all these trends challenged and denied the autonomy of literature (Barry 242). In addition, “new aesthetics” shows the revival of the interests and attitudes toward esthetics first expressed in the late 19th century through the “aesthetic movement,” evident in the works of poet Alfernon Charles Swinburne (1837–1909), poet – painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–82), Irish writer Oscar Wilde (1854–1900), and essayist – critic Walter Pater (1839–94). These writers, whose attitudes are often summed up in the slogan “art for art’s sake,” affirm the autonomy of literature and the arts, while also liberating art and literature from considerations of moral correctness or social utility (Barry 250).

The Radical Esthetic by Isobel Armstrong may be the single most significant work in the “new aesthetics” movement. In this book Armstrong devotes many pages to restoring the role and effect of the emotions in a text, which are often ignored under the strong influence of contemporary literary criticism. Critics, especially male critics, seem to have allowed themselves to approach a text in a “masterly” manner that evades the “affect” of a text and the emotional effect transmitted to readers. Emotions, it seems, have been often rejected and eliminated by critics of the ages.

Armstrong argues that in an alternative esthetic, emotions are not excluded from the justifications of reason, which “hold detachment and objectivity as its norm.” To see artwork as a form of thinking, as well as a form of feeling, we must risk introducing

“work” into the game of esthetics (Armstrong 68). Armstrong further suggests another paradigm of reading that puts more emphasis on emotions:

Having considered responses to the suasive power of the text, I turn to the task of including affect within a definition of the rational, including what we describe as feeling and emotion within knowledge rather than placing them outside it. As a corollary, how do we go about forming another paradigm of reading which does not construct the text as one of the objects of our knowledge? (Armstrong 100)

In *The Radical Esthetic*, pairs of opposing categories such as emotion – reason, affect – knowledge consistently appear. Contemporary critical theory is clearly biased to reason and knowledge, of which Armstrong does not approve. Rather, she holds that the effect of emotion plays an essential role. She insists on considering the nature of creativity from the perspective of emotions as well as knowledge, reason, and even the subtle negotiations between these elements.

Armstrong brings to her book the work of A. E. Housman; an essay entitled “The name and essence of poetry,” which also served as the content of a 1933 lecture often cited as “a hopelessly old-fashioned product of expressive theory.” However, in this work, Housman shares remarkable notions of a poetry that does not “transmit thought” but rather “transfuse emotion”: what one might call a reverse transmission theory. A poet experiences emotion and transfuses it into a poem. The reader encounters the poem and through his or her reading, traces back to the author’s original emotional state, feeling a “vibration corresponding to what was felt by the writer.” Thus, “in emotion, creation precedes description, while in receiving, it follows description” (Armstrong 118). In the 19th century, Lev Tolstoy made a similar statement when he considered that the standard of art is “affective contagion.” So from restoring the role of emotional effect in the work, Armstrong continues to push the issue further with the phenomenon of “transmitting emotions” from the author to readers through the work. This idea approaches the scope of “influence study,” in particular the ideas of Marius Francois Guyard, who, with Jean-Marie Carré, put influence study above the somewhat limited criteria set by Fernand Baldensperger and Paul Van Tieghem. These predecessors gave a quite rigid conception of comparative literature by excluding analogy studies and over emphasizing positivism.

By the time of Carré and Guyard, the definitions of comparative literature had changed: the “spiritual,” “feeling,” and “inspirational” components became visible. Carré, in his foreword to Guyard’s *Comparative Literature* (La Littérature Comparée), regards comparative literature as:

a branch of literary history; it is the study of *spiritual* international relations, of factual contacts which took place between Byron and Pushkin, Goethe and Carlyle, Walter Scott and Vigny, between the works, the *inspirations* and even the lives of writers belonging to several literatures. (Cao XX)

In this book, Guyard gives a broader definition of comparative literature:

Comparative Literature is the history of international literary relations. The comparatist stands at the frontiers, linguistic, or national, and surveys the exchanges of themes, ideas, books, or *feelings* between two or several literatures. His working method will adapt itself to the diversity of his researches. (Yongchang 43)

In Guyard's formulation, "influence study" had mentioned the feeling in the text and its influence. Later, Philippe Van Tieghem (son of Paul Van Tieghem) also includes the phenomenon of transmitting emotions in his own way. In his paper, "Foreign Literary Influence After Romanticism," a section on "Edgar Poe" mentions the word "atmosphere" three times to refer to the atmospheres that French authors owe Poe: the atmosphere of the tales (l'atmosphère de ses récits), the illusionary atmosphere (l'atmosphère hallucinatoire), and the moral atmosphere (atmosphère morale) (Van Tieghem 241, 243). So, not only are they influenced by Poe's composing methods, but they also have *the desire to reinvent his spiritual atmosphere*.

Actually things like "spiritual atmosphere" or "emotions" can be easily felt but are quite vague to identify or depict. Kristeva in *The Black Sun: Depression and Melancholy* also raises this issue:

Sadness leads us into the enigmatic realm of affects - anguish, fear or joy. Irreducible to its verbal or semiological expressions, sadness (like all affect) is the psychic representation of energy displacements caused by external or internal traumas. The exact status of such psychic representations of energy displacements remains, in the present state of psycho-analytical and semiological theories, very vague. (Kristeva 21)

The vagueness of emotion is the reason why contemporary critics want to avoid anything related to it. In Part II of *The Radical Aesthetic*, "The Poetics of Emotion," Armstrong focuses on the importance of reading emotions to esthetic discourse, claiming that the constitutive nature of emotions is ignored by contemporary theory due to "its seeming resistance to analysis" (Armstrong 22). To defend the vagueness of emotion, she posits that even when describing feelings and sensations, "a certain degree of vagueness is inescapable, and may even be the only way of saying anything at all" (Barry 251). This is a bold statement that significantly clarifies Armstrong's two arguments in *The Radical Aesthetic*: the emotional effect of a text cannot be denied, and contemporary theory must see it as a subject worthy of research and criticism. One such example is the case of direct and indirect influence, the "emotional effect" and the "transmitting emotions," relevant to Poe's indirect influence on Han Mac Tu through the intermediary Baudelaire.

In fact, this indirect influence begins as direct influence but on a more complex scale. A direct influence between two literatures, crossing boundaries of place and language, occurs when there is real contact between the writers. More specifically, a literary text may not have been written unless the author had read the "original" text of another writer or had direct contact with him or her. Although it may be possible to prove contact, it is a challenge if a researcher relies solely on a clear causal relationship between writers from different countries, especially when some writers do not mention (accidentally or intentionally) their literary debts. In many cases, an influence can exist between two writers separated by a language barrier with no direct relationship through the interlocution of specific intermediaries, such as individuals, journals or periodicals of literary criticism, saloons or societies of literature, and translations. If there is any influence of this type, the French comparatists call it an indirect influence.

Indirect influences are more complicated to study than direct influences, but they often create fascinating chains of encounters in literature and art. Such is the case with Hemingway's indirect influence in Sweden. Hemingway left a deep impression on the career of Swedish writer Thorsten Jonsson, who later became the model for Swedish short

story writers in the 1940s and 1990s. Hemingway was also the inspiration for Norwegian writer Kjell Askildsen in the 1990s, who in turn went on to influence many Swedish writers himself. Similarly, Chekov influenced the career of Raymond Carver, who became an important author for Swedish writers in the 1990s (Lunden 23).

This paper chooses to explore indirect influence in the case of Poe – Baudelaire – Han because of the reliable documentation in France and Vietnam of the direct influence from Poe to Baudelaire, and from Baudelaire to Han. Baudelaire read Poe from the original English, and Han read Baudelaire from the original French. In 1942, the critic Hoai Thanh cited this circumstance of indirect influence on Vietnamese poetry. Multiple literary sources reveal that Baudelaire publicly praised Poe as an idol, while Han Mac Tu did not conceal his long obsession with Baudelaire. Some observant Vietnamese readers detect a similarity in Han's poems to those of Poe's, though the two poets seem to have no direct contact. But if Poe and Han were put into an "indirect influence" relationship through Baudelaire, the uncertainty would be somewhat clarified. In this paper, we will try to clarify the case of indirect influence of Poe – Baudelaire – Han. From there, we can better see the influence of Poe on the pens of great French literature in the second half of the 19th century and beyond, to literature around the world, including Vietnam.

From the second half of the 19th century, at a time when Americans had yet to appreciate Poe's work, many masters of literature admired him in France. In 1856, Charles Baudelaire respectfully praised Poe: "Edgar Allan Poe, who isn't much in America, must become a great man in France – at least that is what I want" (Garrait-Bourrier 2). He was also astonished to realize the commonalities he shared with that unpopular American author:

The first time I ever opened a book by him I discovered, with rapture and awe, not only subjects which I had dreamt, but whole phrases which I'd conceived, written by him twenty years before. (Garrait-Bourrier 2)

Baudelaire wrote essays praising Poe, while he and Stephan Mallarmé passionately translated Poe's poems and short stories, such that Edgar Poe, a forgotten American writer, became an important figure in French literature. Poe's direct influence on contemporary American literature is negligible but due to his influence on many French poets in the second half of the 19th century, Poe has left a deep impression in world literature. In fact, Poe made his influence in the US indirectly, through the echoes of another literature. For a long time, American readers have tipped their hats to the great pillars of French literature without realizing that their own "ungreat" romantic writer significantly contributed to fomenting a period of writing in France in the second half of the 19th century. Later, when Poe finally came to fame in the United States, his direct influence on American literature was acknowledged. In fact, when Poe first appeared, his strange and fascinating short stories and poems drew attention; however, his essays with bold declarations about the nature of creativity that preceded his era were received quite indifferently. Poe's proud and arrogant behavior drew objections from the mainstream literary community. Philippe Van Tieghem makes the case that French writers were influenced by both Poe's poetry and narrative prose. As a translator of Poe's poems and short stories, Baudelaire can be considered a key figure in this dual influence. Poe's strong impression on Baudelaire can only be compared with that of Goethe's influence on

Gérard de Nerval, namely in *Faust*. On Goethe's written pages, Nerval found a miraculous resemblance. Similarly, Baudelaire discovered in Poe a part of his own identity. By reading Poe, Baudelaire unearthed and reshaped certain creative tendencies inherent in him. While Goethe contributed to the creation of a new Nerval, Poe is a shining example of shaping Baudelaire into a poet of mesmerizing technical skill. Without Poe, Baudelaire might not have found the crucial sensations and forms of imagination that seem integral to his work. In both cases, the influence of two foreign authors on French literature was achieved thanks to their fortuitous encounter with two of France's greatest talents (Van Tieghem 239).

Poe's name was first known in France in 1845, when *Revue Britannique* published a translation of "The Gold-Bug." Six months later, in June 1846, an anonymous writer published an adaptation of "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" in *Quotidienne*, which he presented as an original without introducing the American author and stirred up a heated case of plagiarism. Another highly appreciated tale was "A Descent into the Maelström," translated by Forgues, which appeared in September 1846. In 1847, *Démocratie pacifique* successfully published a series of tales translated by Mme Meunier. This is the translation that caught Baudelaire's attention. In July 1848, Baudelaire published the first translated collection of Poe's short fiction. From there, more translations were proliferated by Baudelaire and others.

Poe's tales had a particular impact on the current of realism flourishing in those days. His presence displaced the influence of Hoffmann and his championing of romanticism. Poe's writing maintained a scientific basis, utilizing the technique of hallucination, the description of psychosis, and the logic of strangeness. In even the most bizarre of stories, readers still find the implementation of a logic that makes his tales fascinating as half true and half unreal, with a strangeness that feels rooted in reality. Poe intellectualizes Hoffmann and revives the usage of fantasy, thereby directly impacting *Moving stories* (*Histoires émouvantes*) of Ch. Barbara (1856–1859), *Black Tree* (*Y Arbre noir*) by H. Babou (1855), and finally Villiers de L'Isle-Adam from 1857 who thought it necessary to memorize many of Poe's pages and thus became infected by this American author's narrative method. In *Cruel Contes* (*Les contes cruels*), Villiers applies Poe's techniques, while Maupassant receives Poe's influence in a more sophisticated way in his works of fantasy, namely "Apparition" (*Apparition*). Des Esseintes considered Poe to be the "master of induction" with decadent literary taste. In addition, it is possible to see Poe's influence both technically and atmospherically in Gautier's works such as "Spirit" (*Spirite*), "Avatar" (*L'Avatar*), "Mummy's Foot" (*Pied de momie*).

The extent and duration of Poe's influence is largely due to the quality of Baudelaire's translations. Baudelaire had exhibited a similar talent upon reading the American poet and did not hesitate to welcome Poe's poetic esthetic, confidently sure of the American's mastery. Baudelaire could not have been influenced by Poe's poetry and esthetic conceptions until 1852, by which point Baudelaire had already formed his own writing technique and esthetic concept. However, the fact that he called Poe "my brother," or "my fellow" and devoted half his time translating and critiquing Poe's work strongly suggests Poe's great influence in his career (Garrait-Bourrier 2).

Baudelaire did not hide his admiration for Poe's literary essays and translated two of his most valuable ones: "The Philosophy of Composition" and "The Poetic Principle," both cited numerous in poetic discourses since 1865. In 1864, Banville also manifested

a concept of esthetics very close to those of Poe. When discussing “Little treatises on French poetry” (*Petit Traité de poésie française*) published in 1872, he affirmed that his work was very much based on Poe’s literary essays.

“Decadent” writers also owe a lot to Poe. Scholar Kathryn Van Spanckeren has marked Poe’s “combination of decadence and romantic primitivism” as a determining character of his success (Van Spanckeren 42). This is why Poe’s work had a tremendous appeal to French writers, especially the decadents who owed their morbid anxiety, their Satanism, their thirst for rare sensations, their taste for exception and artifice all to Poe. In addition, E. Reynaud notes that the mission of the journal *The Decadent* (*Le Décadent*) mirrors exactly that of “The Poetic Principle” (Van Tieghem 243). Although not admiring Poe to the extent of Baudelaire, Rimbaud is also considered a writer with affinities to Poe. He read Poe with Verlaine in London to learn English, and critics have also found traces of Poe’s theories in *A Season in Hell* (*Une saison en enfer*)

Another talented French poet who did not escape Poe’s influential school was Paul Valéry who resumed, expanded and enriched Poe’s esthetic concepts. In *Tel Quel* (Paul Valéry special issue) Paul Valéry has a paragraph that is very similar to Poe’s description of the long “o” for the *nevermore* refrain in “The Raven”:

[...] the refrain forming the close to each stanza. That such a close, to have force, must be sonorous and susceptible of protracted emphasis, admitted no doubt, and these considerations inevitably led me to the long o as the most sonorous vowel in connection with r as the most producible consonant. (Poe, “The Philosophy of Composition” 1087)

And Valéry wrote:

I seek a word (say the poet) a word which is
feminine,
has two syllables,
contains p or f,
ends in a mute vowel ... (Kenneth 296)

Thus, there is an undeniable influence of Edgar Allan Poe on French literature in the late 19th century, a time considered as its golden period. Not only influencing other Western countries, 19th-century French literature flooded its colonies and changed the literary face of these countries. Vietnam is a typical case. The three names considered to have had a strong impact on *New Poetry*² (*Thơ Mới*) are Baudelaire, Valéry and Mallarmé. Baudelaire received from Poe the tendency of “art for art’s sake,” the rationalization of creative work (focusing on composition and choice of words so that the verse becomes most echoing and suggestive), and prominently the phenomenon of *spleen*, which is a staple in Poe’s works. Poe was not the first to coin the term “art for art’s sake,” but he could be regarded as the first author to write creative statements that upheld and affirmed the superiority of “true” art. In 1818, the French philosopher Victor Cousin was the first to use the term “art for art’s sake.” The statement thus preceded Poe by many years. It is possible that Poe did not know of Cousin’s work and that he paid more attention to British authors. Cousin’s doctrine was later called estheticism, endorsed by the British critic Walter Horatio Pater, then by Pre-Raphael-style painters, and the American exiled artist James Abbott McNeill Whistler. In France it served as the artistic platform for symbolic poets, notably Charles Baudelaire. For most Western artists, the principle of “art for art’s sake” is

the foundation for most pioneering artistic movements in the twentieth century. Although Poe had never used the term “art for art’s sake,” his essays “The Philosophy of Composition” and “The Poetry Principle” include statements emphasizing “art for art’s sake” and expressing an author of pure aestheticism in every moment.

In “The Philosophy of Composition,” Poe makes the point: “Beauty is the sole legitimate province of the poem” (“[The Philosophy of Composition](#)” 1082), and in “The Principle of Poetry,” he strongly attacks authors who consider literature as a means of propagating and preaching ethics. He writes:

I allude to the heresy of The Didactic. It has been assumed, tacitly and avowedly, directly and indirectly, that the ultimate object of all Poetry is Truth. Every poem, it is said, should inculcate a moral and this moral is the poetical merit of the work to be adjudged. (Poe, “The Poetic Principle” 906)

Having translated Poe’s essays into French, Baudelaire must have found his resemblance there. Poe’s concept of “art for art’s sake” and his appreciation of the role of composition fascinated and inspired Baudelaire and other symbolists to dive deeper into formal discoveries and special states of focusing on “art processing and occupational skill” (Hoang 285). Through such discoveries, French poetry made breakthroughs and created momentum for modern poetry to flourish. This “true art” trend, adored by French symbolist poets, strongly influenced the writers of *New Poetry* in Vietnam, whose masterpieces were undoubtedly influenced by the flames of “art for art’s sake.” And it was Edgar Allan Poe who fanned the flames of those French symbolists.

As mentioned above, Paul Valéry was also influenced by Poe, in particular his conceptions of poetry as “oscillation” and “hesitation” between sound and meaning” (Hoang 291). This framework sits in close proximity to the statements made by Poe on the nature of poetry in his well-known “Letter to B” and “The Poetic Principle.” For example, “Music, when combined with a pleasurable idea, is poetry; music without the idea is simply music; the idea without the music is prose from its very definitiveness” (*Letter to B*). As well, he saw “the Poetry of words as *The Rhythmical Creation of Beauty*. Its sole arbiter is Taste” (“[The Philosophy of Composition](#)” 907). Thus, it is no coincidence that, “*New poetry* reaches a mastery directly related to musicality: ‘Huqin’ (Nhi ho), ‘Yueqin’ (Nguyet cam) by Xuan Dieu, ‘Autumn’ (Thu) by Che Lan Vien ... The musicality of words and the formal innovation in the works of *New Poetry* authors has been of great interest” (Hoang 279). Thus, the indirect influence from Poe to the writers of *New Poetry* through the intermediary French symbolists is quite clear. The links between these three need a deeper exploration.

Like Baudelaire and Valéry, Mallarmé inherited from Poe an elaboration of language and a sense of formal innovation. In addition, he pays great attention to the suggestiveness of poetry, which Poe mentions in “The Philosophy of Composition.” He was interested in translating Poe’s poetry from 1872 to 1888. In the poem “The Tomb of Edgar Poe” (Le tombeau d’Edgar Poe) he is full of admiration for the American author’s verses:

Changed to Himself at last by eternity,
with a bare sword the Poet has bestirred
his age terrified that it failed to see
how death was glorying in that strange word (Mallarmé 71)

Mallarmé once echoed Poe's notion of "suggestiveness" in "The Philosophy of Composition." In Poe's words:

Two things are invariably required—first, some amount of complexity, or more properly, adaptation; and, secondly, some amount of suggestiveness—some under-current, however indefinite, of meaning. (Poe, "The Philosophy of Composition" 1088)

For Poe, the "suggestiveness" infused an art work with "richness." But unfortunately, many poets confused "suggestiveness" with an "idea," which Poe used to mock:

It is the excess of the suggested meaning - it is the rendering of the upper instead of the under-current of the theme - which turns into prose (and that of the very flattest kind) (Poe, "The Philosophy of Composition" 1079)

This is considered to be the most important paragraph in "The Philosophy of Composition." Poe was determined to return to poetry a certain charm, and "suggestiveness" was that decisive condition. The above paragraph as well as the term suggestiveness was "recycled" by Mallarmé in an essay:

To name an object is to remove three-quarters of the enjoyment of a poem, which derives from the pleasure of gradually perceiving it; to suggest (suggérer) it, that is the dream. (Huret)

In his symbolist manifesto, "The Art of Poetry" (Art Poétique), Verlaine also thinks that "music is first, and verse must always have melody. Poetry is not descriptive, not narrative but suggestive" (Phan 254). Later the *New Poetry* authors inherited from the French symbolists a sense of bringing out the musicality of words to create "atmosphere" and suggest "mood" (Hoang 278). And this principle of writing is still present in many contemporary works of poetry.

According to researcher Do Duc Hieu, there are two waves of influence from French poetry on *New Poetry* in the first half of the 20th century: the first is largely the influence of French romantic poetry on the expressiveness of Vietnamese poetry. The second is "deeply influenced by Baudelaire and the symbolist French poets" (Do 153–54). The works and concepts of French symbolist authors have had a profound impact on the *New Poetry* of Vietnam (1930–1945). Because of the limited scope of the paper, we can only study the influence of Baudelaire on some famous *New Poetry* authors, in particular, Han Mac Tu.

Baudelaire was the French poet who left the deepest impression in Vietnamese poetry of that period. In a well-known essay, "An Age in Poetry," that looks back on ten years of *New Poetry* (1932–1941), the foremost critic of *New Poetry*, Hoai Thanh, refers to the influence of French poetry on *New Poetry* and names the following poets: Baudelaire (1821–1876), Rimbaud (1854–1891), Verlaine (1844–1896), Mallarmé (1842–1898), Valéry (1871–1945). In this essay, Baudelaire is mentioned some ten times while other French poets are named only a few times. Regarding the influence of Baudelaire on *New Poetry*, often the "correspondence of sense" (correspondance des sens) is first cited, originating from Baudelaire's famous line that "Perfumes, sounds, and colors correspond" (Les parfums les couleurs et les sons se répondent). In this verse chosen by Xuan Dieu as the epigraph for his poem "The Magic" (Huyen dieu), readers can note the "correspondance des sens":

Darling, listen to the **perfumed melody**
 Drunk as wedding night wine;
 The scent penetrates into the bone marrow,
 A magical tone, penetrating to the soul (Hoai Thanh and Hoai Chan 134)

In “Walking the Aromatic Path” (Đi giữa đường thơm) Huy Can also wrote a verse that calls upon a “correspondance des sens”:

The sun embroidered on the ground the shadows of bamboo and poinciana
 Slowly let go of the curtain, entangled on feet
 Going to a height or going to a depth?
 I don't know – A bit overwhelmed
 In the air ... **the aroma and color blend** ... (Hoai Thanh and Hoai Chan 156)

Or in “The Color of Time” (Màu thời gian), Doan Phu Tu has a stanza of four lines devoted to the color and scent of time:

The color of time is not green
 The color of time is purple
 The scent of time is not strong
 The scent of time is light (Hoai Thanh and Hoai Chan 123)

But perhaps the poet most profoundly influenced by Baudelaire is Han Mac Tu. Though it seems that “correspondance des sens” does not leave much imprint in his poems, the most palpable influence is the state of dense spleen, which is suffused in the verses of Baudelaire. Baudelaire used the English word “spleen” in some of his poems “to qualify the devilish attractions or bad pulsions which pull the subject downward to self-destruction and create a state of anguish and moral depression” (Garrat-Bourrier 2). As mentioned, among the French poets, Baudelaire is the author who left the deepest impression on *New Poetry*, and among the *New Poetry* poets, the author who received Baudelaire most deeply is probably Han Mac Tu. Han Mac Tu is a quite special writer. His writing seems to have two distinct areas: *purity* and *abnormality*. His poetry of “purity” can be seen in such poems as “Vi Da Village” (Đáy thôn Vi Da), “The Ripe Spring” (Mua xuân chín), “Playing in Moon Season” (Chơi giữa mùa trăng), “Golden Moon Jade Moon” (Trăng vàng trăng ngọc). These poems with clarity, purity and delicate beauty touch a spiritual world that causes readers to sublimate with a more or less pessimistic feeling. In these poems, splendor and perfection seem just brief moments of reality, or even just illusions. Han Mac Tu’s “purity” poems seem to take a lot of inspiration from Tang poetry (Đuong Thi) and many Vietnamese poets in the past. His “abnormality” poems include “Suicide Moon” (Trăng tu tu), “Drunk for the moon” (Say trăng), “End of Autumn” (Cuối thu). They often lean toward a state of spleen that is full of despair and mental instability. Sometimes this state reaches its climax and is vented into lines of madness and rebellion. It seems that in these poems, the mark of Baudelaire and symbolism is clear. In his day, Han Mac Tu did not disguise his admiration for Baudelaire. Che Lan Vien once wrote in his memoirs, “Han talked only of Baudelaire while we were together” (2017 192).

The abnormal and violent images from Baudelaire’s poetry left a deep impression on many of Han’s poems. Here we will study some of Han’s “bloody” poems. According to Lieu Truong, Han Mac Tu and Baudelaire had a meeting “in the metaphysical dimension

through two haunting things: blood and salvation” (Truong 41). In *The Flowers of Evil* (Les fleurs du mal), there are bloody poems such as “The Destruction” (La destruction), “Love and Skull” (L’amour et le crâne), and “The Fountain of Blood” (La fontaine du sang). Baudelaire’s “blood” is present in verses that evoke sensuality, brutality and masochism. Such as the first stanza in “The Fountain of Blood”:

Sometimes it seems my blood spurts out in gobs
As if it were a fountain’s pulsing sobs;
I clearly hear it mutter as it goes,
Yet cannot find the wound from which it flows. (Baudelaire, “The Fountain of Blood” 249)

Having tried to be Poe’s French contemporary counterpart, it is very likely that Baudelaire was mesmerized by Poe’s horror short stories, especially “The Masque of the Red Death.” To escape the plague known as the “Red Death,” Prince Prospero and many nobles took refuge in a castle completely separate from the outside world. While they revel in pleasures, the Red Death appears as a bloodstained corpse. In great fear, the nobles collapse one by one and drown in pools of their own blood. And just as Baudelaire took inspiration from Poe’s horror stories, Han Mac Tu was haunted by Baudelaire’s “blood” poems. Although Han’s “blood” poems do not bear cruelty, death and powerful self-destruction are fixtures:

I lay in the pool of moon that night
Morning wake up madly vomiting blood
(Drunk for the moon) (Say trang) (Han 60)

There are also “bloody” verses that are still full of the poetry and sophistication of Tang poetry (Duong Thi):

Am I still here or somewhere?
Who left me under the deep sky?
Why do the poinciana flowers bloom in blood,
Dripping tears into my heart
 (“Tears”) (Nhưng giot le) (Hàn 44)

There are other verses that are quite mysterious, as moments recorded from hallucinations:

Who weaves and stretches the sky silk
Who releases the birds to fly to the moon,
And who carries the barrels of blood across the snow,
A lambskin coat draped over the whole body
 (“End of Autumn”) (Cuoi thu) (Han 45)

It is not difficult to find traces of direct influence from Baudelaire to Han Mac Tu. But from Poe to Han Mac Tu is less clear. In the early 20th century, the name and career of Poe were rarely mentioned in Vietnam. In 1917, researcher Pham Quynh in his introduction to Baudelaire’s poetry wrote the following: “Baudelaire was the most talented French poet of the 19th century” (Kim Oanh). In listing and summarizing Baudelaire’s works, he mentions Baudelaire’s career as a translator, importantly, his “translations of tales of American writer Edgar Poe.” Researcher Huu Ngoc once recalled: “I knew Edgar Poe from ‘The Gold-Bug’ and ‘The Raven,’ that was when I was studying at Lycée du Protectorat” (Kim Oanh). In the memoir, *Those years*, writer Vu Ngoc Phan reminisced

about the significant events of 1932–1933: “To have the *Divine Comedy* of Dante, *Don Quixote* of Cervantes, the fantastic tales of Hoffmann and Poe, we must find them quite hard.” Perhaps it was not until 1936 that the brief biography and the first translation of the poems “The Raven” and “A Dream Within a Dream” of Edgar Poe appeared in *Famous Works from Europe and America* (Danh van Au My) translated from French by Nguyen Giang (Kim Oanh). It can be seen that both Poe’s poetry and prose came to Vietnamese readers early on, though his poems did not impress as much as his tales. The writer The Lu is considered a rare case of Poe’s direct influence: his short story “Gold and Blood” (Vang va mau) is said to have been influenced significantly by Poe’s “The Gold-Bug.” In short, before 1945, Poe came to Vietnamese readers exclusively through French translations, with a few translations made available from French into Vietnamese. There is no document indicating Han Mac Tu or the other poets of *New Poetry* saw Edgar Allan Poe as an important figure in their writing careers.

But if we read a selection of Han Mac Tu’s poems carefully, we can see that the imagination, dreams, fantasy, fear, sickness, abundant musicality, and a tendency toward the purity of “*art for art’s sake*” are seem to descend from Poe through Baudelaire (Khê). Right from the 1940s, Hoai Thanh clearly recognized the indirect influence of Edgar Allan Poe on Han Mac Tu’s poetry. He stated that Han Mac Tu was “heavily influenced by Baudelaire and through Baudelaire, influenced by the American writer Edgar Poe” (Hoai Thanh and Hoai Chân 40). This indirect influence is not difficult to recognize, but we also have to take into account the similarities in taste and the state of “sickness” of these three authors.

In a situation where there is no reception (Han does not read Baudelaire, Baudelaire does not read Poe), their compositions would still bear similarities, but these cannot be as remarkable as with the direct and indirect influences from the poetic masters in their hearts. And it can be said with certainty that neither Baudelaire nor Han Mac Tu were copies of their masters. What they took from their masters, Baudelaire from Poe and Han from Baudelaire, strongly resonated with their own personal visions to create unique masterpieces. This is very common in world literature, as with the case of Swedish writer Thorsten Jonsson (mentioned above). Jonsson was a powerful contributor to the revival of short stories in the 1940s and enlightened young Swedish writers with Hemingway’s short stories, which he translated. In his first two book-length collections, *As It Usually Is* (Som det brukar vara) (1939) and *Flee To Water and Morning* (Fly till vatten och morgon) (1941), Jonsson proved himself as not simply an imitator, but rather a highly skilled writer on his own. He subtly assimilated Hemingway’s iceberg technique and paratactic style into a typical Swedish setting (Lunden 27). “Influence study” also involves an interesting kind of “double influence”: the writer who initially receives indirect influence from a foreign author and later receives direct influence. An example would be the Byron – Pushkin – Lermontov case. Pushkin’s narrative poems bearing the imprint of Byron’s “Oriental tales” left their mark in Mikhail Yurievich Lermontov’s writing. But later, when Lermontov had the opportunity to refer to Byron’s original texts, he seemed to be able to incorporate into his work various artistic aspects that Pushkin could not. These aspects went on to contribute to the development of Russian literature. The question raised here is that if Han Mac Tu had, after receiving an indirect influence from Poe through Baudelaire, received direct influence from Poe, would his career look different? Moreover, Poe’s career includes impressive essays and short stories in addition

to his poems. Han Mac Tu could only read Baudelaire's poetry, rarely having access to his critical articles. There is no documentation showing that Baudelaire's essays and reviews were widely read in Vietnam. The answer is certainly not difficult to guess, because when the writer has both indirect and direct influence from a foreign author, it undoubtedly creates a double influence. But after all, outside influences are still less important than the creator's own talent. In Poe's works, he pushes feelings to the extreme, making readers of any era fascinated and frightened. Not only Han Mac Tu but even Baudelaire could not recreate Poe's strange and obsessional atmosphere, which is often called Poe's *spleen*. However, this did not mean that Baudelaire and Han Mac Tu could not compose as well as Poe. A talented writer's influences push their work to new artistic heights. Han Mac Tu is such a case. His flawless beauty as well as his complicated mental state makes his poems still admired today. However, indirect as well as direct influence from the masters is undeniable. Just considering the case of Han Mac Tu, we can imagine the profound and powerful indirect influence of Poe on *New Poetry*. For many French authors, we may have come to realize the desire to utilize Poe's processes and to reinvent his spiritual atmosphere. For *New Poetry's* authors, because Poe's influence is indirect, especially in the field of poetry (From English texts to French texts to finally Vietnamese), we cannot clearly track the learning of his "processes," but we can feel the desire to "reinvent the spiritual atmosphere" of Poe's works through the intermediary Baudelaire. This partly explains the questions of many readers when they feel that Poe and Han Mac Tu have something shared even though the careers of these two poets seem completely separate.

Let us compare three poems: Poe's "The Raven," Baudelaire's "Spleen" and Han's "Suicide Moon." "The Raven" is a narrative poem. On a cold winter night, a young man, suffering from the death of his lover, hears a sound outside the window – a stray raven. No matter what question the young man asks it, the raven only replies with a single word: "Nevermore." In the last stanza, the author makes the raven "emblematical of Mournful and never ending Remembrance" ("The Philosophy of Composition" 1089):

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting,
 On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
 And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon that is dreaming,
 And the lamplight o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the
 floor;
 And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
 Shall be lifted – nevermore. ("The Philosophy of Composition" 1046)

In this stanza, Poe describes the lamplight "streaming" like water, which, taken with the word "floating," transforms the narrow room into the space of a water's surface, making the silhouette of the raven imprinted on the floor more flickering and mysterious.

Baudelaire's "Spleen" describes a gloomy, cramped sky as a dim realm that torments and confines human souls:

When low and heavy sky weighs like a lid
 Upon the spirit moaning in ennui,
 And when, spanning the circle of the world,
 It pours a black day sadder than our nights (Baudelaire, "Spleen (IV)" 149)

The word "pour" (verser) here also liquefies the "black day" (un jour noir), making the reader feel more clearly the author's immersion in the spleen mood without escape.

In Han's "Suicide Moon," there is a scene that also resembles the mood of the two poems above: that of picking up the moon's corpse from the cold well. Though the poem has no line describing the moon's reflection in the bottom of a well, the reader immediately envisions this very scene and a lonely person engulfed in a moment of mental chaos and madness thinks of a suicide moon:

The mouth of the well opened
 Swallowing the vastness
 Swallowing fallen stars
 Chaotic, chaotic, a chaotic well
 I was nervous, panicked and scared to go crazy
 Jumping down the well to pick up the moon's corpse (Han 52)

The poem ends with the speaker "jumping down the well to pick up the moon's corpse." This action erases the image of a dead moon in the cold well. That frigid, solitary state suddenly changes. However, this state is still full of loneliness, madness, and despair. It seems that of the three poems, Poe's ending is the most tragic with the feeling of eternal stagnation and imprisonment. Poe affords the most desperate solution for the melancholy speaker – his soul incapable of escaping the raven's shadow – nevermore. As is evident, the floor (with the shadow of the raven), the sky, and the well in these three poems bear similarities. They all refer to the space of stagnant water, which is fluid but confined by a dead-end. They are compatible with souls of spleen, boredom and despair.

However, we cannot just attribute these shared symbols to a great example of indirect influence. In the 18th century, in a culture quite distant to France and America, Xueqin Cao gives lady Daiyu Lin³ the spontaneous utterance, "The soul of flowers buried under the moon" as she and lady Xiang Yun are watching the moon on the water and composing poetry together beside a dying lotus pond on a quiet night. Even the obsession with blood in all three poets, or the "echoed image" of blood from Poe to Baudelaire and then to Han Mac Tu is difficult to assert as a chain of indirect influence. In a number of texts, both Baudelaire and Han admit to being haunted by their literary master's images, but there is no text where either explicitly admits to borrowing or imitating the images of blood from the works of these masters. Some critics have perceived this chain of "blood" influences and many readers have agreed. Whether such claims are reasonable or not is known only by Baudelaire and Han themselves, something of an *aporia*, or unresolvable contradiction, in "influence study."

In fact there are authors who are completely unrelated and yet still have surprising similarities. This may be "the similarity not due to influence" that P.V. Tieghem mentioned in *Comparative Literature* (1931). In such cases, we can refer only to the spirit of a gloomy atmosphere in these three poems, as well as their tendency to align with "art for art's sake." The particular suggestiveness of Poe's works fascinated and seduced Baudelaire and other French Symbolists, which made a strong resonance in their poems. And similarly, the suggestiveness in the poems of Baudelaire and the French symbolists seduced Han Mac Tu and other *New Poetry* authors, thereby making a spectacular transformation of Vietnamese poetry in the period from 1930–1945.

It can be seen that through Baudelaire and the 19th century French poets, the authors of *New Poetry* received Poe's artistic tendencies as well as his particular mental state.

Poe's role was vital in shaping aspects of French literature in the second half of the 19th century, but his was not the only contribution. Repercussions of Romantic literature, with such names as Rousseau, Goethe, Hugo, Hoffman, Byron, Keats, Wordsworth, Coleridge and others, invigorated a fresh and novel wind across Europe. The influence of Romantic literature is so widespread that many scholars classify the works of 19th century Symbolist and Realist authors as post-romanticism. Poe himself, the bright star of American Romantic literature, was also heavily influenced by European Romantic authors. And later, it was in Europe where he was discovered. Poe's great admiration in France shows the French literary taste to have been ahead of the time, as French authors quickly embraced this strange genius who was just a flash in the American literary sky. It seems Poe awakened and stirred the creative inspiration deep within these writers, with their meeting not just an ordinary process of reception, but rather one of special resonance. Because of this miraculous meeting, his indirect influence spread throughout the world, even in his homeland, the United States. And Vietnam is not out of this field of indirect influence either.

Denis Huisman once wrote in his book *Aesthetics*: "An artist's subjective emotions always tend to evoke beauty, so Lev Tolstoy called the standard of art an affective contagion" (Huisman 102). It is thus possible to see the case of Poe's indirect influence as a chain of "affective contagions." And though it seems that this may be an old idea, leading to the "influence study" in France the first half of the 20th century, now considered obsolete, but objectively one can trace how "influence study" introduced the criteria and standards that had a profound impact on later trends of comparative literature. Armstrong's emphasis on "emotional effect" and "transfused emotions" shows that this author of the New Esthetic is in tune with "influence study," especially the period in which Jean-Marie Carré and Marius Francois Guyard refer to the "connection between inspirations" and "exchange of feelings" in the process of influencing. This is also in accordance with the spirit of post theory criticism, which aims to restore critical aspects previously harmed by theory. To assert that the concepts such as "emotional effect" and "transfused emotions" that Armstrong proposes in *The Radical Esthetic* clarify the case of indirect influence between Poe – Baudelaire – Han will certainly cause controversy. Surely many might see it as an inaccurate and vague solution. Yet it is not possible to remove emotion from the creative process, and so how do we deal with it? Returning to Isobel Armstrong's own defense of "emotions": that even when describing emotions and feelings, "a certain degree of vagueness is inescapable, and may even be the only way of saying anything at all" (Barry 251). As it is, the discussion of emotion in a text is still a challenge in academic research; it is an unpleasant subject for the kind of rational critical thinking that has an almost absolute affinity for contemporary critical theory. And the affective contagion in indirect influence is even more challenging. This would all be otherwise if one day the phrase "I feel" had equal value to "I see" in the context of critical research. And of course, this will never happen. So we have to accept the fact that if someone says "I'm on the side of tears"⁴ and is praised by many people, it also means that many people choose to turn their backs. And so on forever.

Notes

1. Han Mac Tu (1912–1940) was one of the most prominent poets of the *New Poetry* movement in Viet Nam. His most known poetry collections are *Countryside Girl* (Gai que, *Mad*

Poetry (Thơ dien) and *Play during the Moon Season* (Chơi giữa mùa trăng).. He died at Quy Hoa leprosy hospital at the age of 28 due to health exhaustion from long-term leprosy.

2. In the early 1930s, a strong poetic renewal campaign took place in Vietnamese literature with the emergence of a wave of new poetry with original creative personalities. The campaign proposes to use new types of poetry, not following the rules of the previous poetry genres. This reformation entered the literary history of Vietnam with the name The New Poetry Movement.
3. Daiyu Lin is one of the principal characters of Cao Xueqin's classic 18th century Chinese novel *Dream of the Red Chamber* (红楼梦).
4. "I'm on the side of tears" is the name of the first chapter in *Duong Tuong Poetry* (Duong Tuong Thơ) (Writer Union Publisher, 2017). Duong Tuong is a famous poet and translator in Vietnam.

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