

## Some Direction to Exploit Aspects of Vietnamese Values in Vietnamese Literature

By

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### Abstract

Up to now, Vietnamese literature has been discovered and evaluated by researchers from many different research angles: Vietnamese literature is recognized from itself in terms of content and artistic value; Vietnamese literature is seen from the point of view of related sciences such as religion, belief, culture, sociology, psychology.... And in each approach, the researcher has more interesting findings about the national literature. However, the most multifaceted view of the national literature is to look at it from the perspective of Vietnamese values (Values about Vietnam and Vietnamese people in general). From the reference to the approaches of the social sciences - humanities in general, this article will outline some specific orientations for the exploitation of Vietnamese values in Vietnamese literature. .

**Key word:** Vietnamese literature; Vietnamese values, Vietnamese people.

### Introduction

Vietnamese literature is a concept that combines only two basic components, folklore and written literature of the Vietnamese people in general (including overseas Vietnamese). In the first stage of history, when the nation did not have a written language (only a voice), the oral form played an important role in preserving folk creations. From the 10th century to the present, through the ups and downs of history, Vietnamese literature has always moved and developed continuously with various types of Chinese characters, Nom characters and then Quoc Ngu (Vietnamese nowadays). It can be affirmed that both the folklore and the written literature have been and will continue to be the places that show almost fully and vividly the aspects of the country and the Vietnamese people from the traditional to modern.

## Research and discussion content

### ***Who needs to research about Vietnam?***

For quite a long time, it was assumed that researching Vietnam (Vietnamese: Nghiên cứu Việt Nam, French: Étude Vietnam, Chinese: 越南研究) is for foreigners who want to learn about Vietnam. And in fact, due to the peculiarities of the Vietnamese national history, it was the Chinese and then the French who paid adequate attention and had many famous works and scholars in this field. Next are the studies of some Russian, North American, Australian, Japanese, Korean scholars... Neighboring countries and Southeast Asia have only recently paid adequate attention to the research about Vietnam. However, in the current period of industrialization, modernization and comprehensive integration of Vietnam, studying and researching about Vietnam is no longer just a concern due to the simple needs of researcher as before foreigners, but it is also the task of Vietnamese researchers themselves, the aim of realizing and re-perceiving the characteristics and value aspects of the country and people of Vietnam to serve the cause of development sustainable development. If the first records of Vietnamese studies were found in ancient bibliographies of some medieval scholars, the situation changed at the beginning of the twentieth century, and especially in the 90s of the last century, when the "Vietnamese studies" training was born with bachelor's degrees, then master's and doctoral degrees. Further proof that domestic and foreign scholars and researchers are interested in researching Vietnam are the five international conferences on Vietnamese studies that were successfully held in 1997, 2002, 2008, 2012 and 2016. From the contents of the conferences, many issues in the research have been resolved and there are still many issues that need to be continued in the coming time.

### ***Vietnamese literature and the realistic depiction of the country and people of the nation***

In relation to the intensive research fields of Vietnamese studies, it can be affirmed that literature has a particular characteristic in expressing and discovering about the country and its people. If we put literature in comparison with some other arts such as painting, sculpture, music, dance, architecture... It is easy to see that literature has had an earlier and more successful development, especially in the medieval period. Through periods, historical periods, through authors and literary works, foreigners and Vietnamese have had the opportunity to have a better and deeper understanding of the country and people of the Vietnamese nation.

Each literary period, each literary genre and each literary author will have its own features in perception and reflect the reality of the country and Vietnamese people. Therefore, through learning about writers, about the personality types of literary authors in different periods, we will have the opportunity to better understand the beauty of the soul of previous generations in history as well as in the past the beauty of people of all ethnic groups in particular, the beauty of Vietnamese people in general. Through studying and researching literary works, we will have an understanding of the countryside across the country, about the customs, practices, lifestyle, thinking... of the Vietnamese people the past as well as the present. In general, through literature, we will have the opportunity to have a relatively comprehensive understanding of the characteristics of reality (reflected reality, second reality) about the country and national. Therefore, setting out and deepening understanding and research on aspects of Vietnamese values in literature in general and Vietnamese literature in particular is a completely promising direction, not only meaningful to the research Vietnam (Vietnamese studies) but also with the study of Vietnamese literature.

## *Some orientations to exploit Vietnamese values in Vietnamese literature*

### *From the cultural approach in literature*

Approaching Vietnamese values from literary texts is a research direction that has been applied since the 90s of the twentieth century, although mainly from the perspective of culture. Researchers have initially shown the ability to integrate and imprint Vietnamese values of literary works, considering literary works as a material to conduct survey on manifestations of Vietnamese values. Of course, researchers also warn and omit the subjective view of individual writers before analyzing literary works. At that time, literary works were only elements of national character. We understand that is a particular aspect of the principle of reflection of art in general and literature in particular about the country and people of Vietnam through historical stages. Researcher Tran Le Bao, from the approach to culture in literature, proposed the following: "In the process of specific analytical manipulation, critics rely on specific linguistic expression models in literary works such as: word system, syntactic form, chapter structure, pictorial system, and different cross-relationships of the text, to analyze and interpret the psychological and aesthetic factors conveyed by the linguistic form; The next step is to deeply exploit the cultural connotations that have been condensed in it. From this perspective, it is possible to open up extremely rich knowledge about philosophical thought, religion, morality, customs and habits... of a certain community." [1] In addition, Associate Professor Tran Le Bao also presented reflections on the role of culture (one of many aspects of Vietnamese values) in participating in the process of creating meaning of literary works and works literature also becomes the land that preserves the cultural values of a period, a national community. Quite similar to the above view of Associate Professor Tran Le Bao, in the book "Tiep can truyen Kieu tu goc nhin van hoa" Associate Professor Le Nguyen Can pointed out more specifically, saying: "Culture itself is also a mode and form of action, culture is a technological production form of human activities. From this perspective, a literary work describes and carries within it cultural expressions through behaviour: dealing with the environment, dealing with society... dealing with social relationships" [2] Professor Tran Nho Thin presented his concept of culture in an open system "Cultural Anthropology". According to the professor, Vietnamese culture is also a product of cultural influence exchanges between China and India. Therefore, the concept of culture in this approach of Professor Tran Nho Thin is relatively broad. Culture is a value category that helps people get out of their ignorance. Culture includes civilization, economy, health, eating, spirituality, literature... not just festivals or customs, religious beliefs... And so, the content of culture in Literary works, in essence, are Vietnamese values in general.

Any literary value starts from a cultural environment, from a certain spiritual life. A literary work that is the offspring of a writer is a product of an era. Writers exist in the atmosphere of the times together with the environment and cultural life, which live to form the aesthetic thought expressed by the writers in the literary work. Cultural factors in particular and Vietnamese values in general will greatly affect the success of the work. It is an important material for writers to think about life. Approaching Vietnamese values in literary research will help readers discover the truth of art and understand the cultural of a period and a nation. From a cultural perspective, Professor Tran Nho Thin pointed out some of cultural approaches to Vietnamese medieval literature as follows:

- For medieval literature, it is necessary to restore the representation of cultural space as well as the influencing factors of the times
- Find out the relationship between literary works and culture of the times
- Identify the socio-cultural basis that has shaped the literary work

Thus, culture governs the development of literature, whereas literature also affects culture, either on the whole structure, or through its other components. There is a close relationship between literature and culture. The study of literature from a cultural perspective is a necessary and promising direction. Along with the literary approach by sociology, aesthetics, history... the literary approach by culturology helps us to more fully interpret the work of art with the expressed cultural system. Such a cultural approach is to place literature in cultural space to subtly penetrate the world of artistic creation of the writer.

#### ***Approaching Vietnamese values in literature***

Referring to the viewpoint as well as the cultural approach in the above literary work of Professor Tran Nho Thin, in order to well exploit the aspects of Vietnamese values in the literary work, we believe that the researcher some specific points should be noted and implemented:

By the model of reflection theory, Marxist literary theory holds that literary works have the ability to reflect and reproduce life. That means that works of word art can preserve evidences of life, traditions that are considered the most characteristic for a historical period of a certain community. Meanwhile, humans are seen as subjects of culture. Humans by the process of working, communicating and behaving in a combination of relationships with nature and society have created culture. Culture is the achievement of humans. Humans are the center of literary creation and also have the important task of becoming a means to express all the expressions that are considered as cultural values of a nation. The literary character thus becomes a cultural testimony, a testimony of value for an era that belongs to it. [3]

Taking literary objects to learn Vietnamese values, on the one hand, can inherit the research results of literary researchers; However, on the other hand, you have to come from there to analyze and evaluate "it's not just it" but also what it means for the perception, re-perception, and new perception of the country and peoples in Vietnam as well as now. Aspects of Vietnamese value in Vietnamese literary works will be extremely diverse and rich, and the imagination of the researcher to be able to survey and explain it thoroughly needs to put literature in its relationship with other aspects of national social life.

Most of the approaches to studying Vietnamese literature from the past to the present, whether from practice or theory, any research method can be reduced to the study of the characteristics, value of content, and the art of writing. But approaching literature from the faculty of interdisciplinary Vietnamese studies only needs to stop at the value of the work's content, to point out aspects of the country's and Vietnamese people's characteristics in the historical, spatial and cultural contexts the time in which the literary work appeared. Along with that, the researcher needs to interpret how these aspects of values have changed in the present day in order to find an experience for reality. [4]

In the simplest terms, aspects of Vietnamese values in Vietnamese literature will include knowledge about a number of fields such as history, society, culture, religion, belief, and ethnicity, anthropology ... of Vietnamese people are encoded through the art world of the work, containing the aesthetic conception of the creator as well as the refraction of the aesthetic of the era in which it was produced. [5]

## A few specific examples

Based on the above viewpoints and approaches, hereafter, in order to facilitate learners when choosing topics and fields of study in Vietnam when taking literature as an object, we give some specific examples as follows:

If viewed from the "literary author" type, the researcher can exploit the expression of the beauty of the individual writer in each historical period and different era. The personal beauty of the writer will be recorded by the bibliography and can also be reflected in the world of art. In Vietnamese literature, excluding the folklore part, from medieval to modern literature, we have witnessed the formation, movement and development of many types of authors in which they are preserved marks the human beauty of a certain era. Researcher Tran Dinh Huu once mentioned the type of author of Confucianism in practice, amateur Confucianism, and reclusive Confucianism in Vietnamese medieval and modern literature. Professor Tran Ngoc Vuong used to delve deeply into the type of amateur Confucian author in Vietnamese medieval and modern literature [6]. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Le Van Tan has deeply studied the Confucian recluse author model and the Confucian author studying in Vietnamese medieval literature. Associate Professor Nguyen Huu Son once chaired a project at the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences on types of authors in medieval Vietnamese literature. In addition, from thinking, different types of Confucian writers, Zen masters, monks, kings, mandarins, generals, etc., have also been recognized by many scholars in medieval and modern literature interested research. We can refer to those studies from the approach of the literary studies department to show more clearly and specifically the beauty of a person in an era that has passed. Besides, the type of professional author and writer that appeared at the end of the 19th century, the beginning of the 20th century to the present stage is still a gap that needs more research from the Vietnamese research approach. Models of writers of Vietnamese literature in the early twentieth century to 1945, for example, are writers and politicians such as Phan Boi Chau, Pham Chau Trinh, Nguyen Thuong Hien, Huynh Thuc Khang, Nguyen Luong Bang, Ho Chi Minh... To the writers and artists (professional writers) of later realism literature such as Nguyen Cong Hoan, Vu Trong Phung, Ngo Tat To, Nam Cao, Nguyen Hong, Bui Hien... or authors of romantic trends in prose such as Thach Lam, Thanh Tinh, Ho Dzenh, Nhat Linh, Khai Hung, Hoang Dao...; writers of romantic trends in poetry such as Tan Da, The Lu, Xuan Dieu, Huy Can, Nguyen Binh, Han Mac Tu, Che Lan Vien, Anh Tho... The samples of writers - revolutionary soldiers of Vietnamese literature in the period from 1945 to 1975 are also very numerous, but approach the beauty of the artist as a convergence of human beauty that the Vietnamese era will give us interesting ones. [7]

Judging from the type of literary work, the realistic aspects of the content are reflected in the literary work, it is possible to exploit the characteristics of the country and people of Vietnam such as history, society, nature and scenery of regions, ethnic groups, religious beliefs, classes of people, characteristics of communication culture, behavior, dialects, customs and habits... The beauty that is envisioned as a Vietnamese value in this approach can be clearly seen through the system of folklore, medieval literature, and modern literature. The Faculty of Literary Studies has had many works and research topics that have been mentioned in these aspects, but from the Vietnamese study approach, we can still continue to clarify and be more specific Vietnamese values, characteristics of the country and people of Vietnam through literary works. [8]

From the perspective of literary comparison, we can compare the performance and characteristics of the country and people of Vietnam through historical periods through works of the same historical period or different historical periods. We can also extend our approach

to comparative study of two or more works, groups of works, types of works, types of authors of different literatures having an influence or even unrelated relationship contact relationship but share common influences to show the similarities and differences of the two countries and people. This is a promising orientation that promises many results of theoretical and practical significance, not only for the faculty of Vietnamese studies but also for the faculty of literary studies. This is a direction that the department of literary studies has been doing for many years and has quite a lot of valuable scientific works. However, combining the application of both literary research theory and Vietnamese research theory, recently, we highly appreciate the choice and research results of PhD student Kim KiHyun [11] in his doctoral thesis conducted at the Academy of Social Sciences, led by me and Associate Professor Vu Thanh. Although the scientific major of this thesis is Vietnamese literature, combined with the interdisciplinary research method of Vietnamese studies, the PhD student adopted the representation of the character system in the medieval stories of Vietnam and Korea to see many aspects of the beauty of the country and the people of the two countries in history. This is a worthy study for those who are interested in the field of comparative cultural and literary research. [12]

## Conclusion

Vietnamese literature has a long and rich process of formation and development with many aspects of content and artistic value. There are many Vietnamese values that need to continue to be studied from the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach, in which the multidisciplinary approach to Vietnamese studies is a promising direction. From folklore to written literature, from selectively absorbing cultural quintessence, Chinese and Indian literature... in the medieval period to cultural quintessence, French and Western literature in modern times, Vietnamese literary authors always try to affirm their bravery as well as best show the cultural, the beauty of the country and the people of the nation through different historical periods. In the context of integration and globalization in all aspects of social life, from economy to history, politics, culture, literature... in the current period, the discovery of Vietnamese values and comparisons Those values with other cultures and literatures in the region as well as in the world have become even more urgent to promote the image of Vietnam to the world. This small study of ours hopes to open doors for young Vietnamese as well as foreign students who want to pursue the Faculty of Vietnamese Studies.

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