



Preserving Nature - Messages from Contemporary Vietnamese Poetry

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This research affirms the importance of protecting nature and the environment, through messages calling for, forecasting, warning about natural disasters, epidemics, and destruction of the natural environment in contemporary Vietnamese poetry by the method of survey and text analysis. The protection of nature is an urgent issue for all countries in the world. The research results confirm the effectiveness of education and propaganda measures to protect nature through Vietnamese poetry. At the same time, it shows that the interdisciplinary coordination in educating the sense of protecting nature is extremely important, especially when the Covid 19 pandemic is raging around the world today.

Keywords: *Environment, Nature, Covid 19, Messages, Vietnamese Poetry.*

Introduction

The XXI century is the century in which people face many risks caused by themselves such as epidemics, wars, economic recession ... In particular, epidemic disasters such as Covid 19, lung disease and nature destruction are common problems that all humanity is facing, People have to answer big questions like, "Where are we wrong from?", "Are we sinners for the next generation?", "How to protect nature and the environment that we live in", ... From there, determine the need for concrete, practical actions for our nature and the earth. The message of nature protection has been throughout Vietnamese literature from past to present, contributing to the propaganda and calling people to join hands for a green, clean and bright nature.

In the face of the severe devastating global environment, Vietnamese and international literature have raised urgent issues such as warnings about the destruction of nature and the change of ecological environment. Vietnam has always suffered from the severe consequences caused by natural disasters. In 2017, Vietnam was assessed as a record year of natural disasters. Vietnamese literature has many literary works that address the deep, multi-dimensional voices about the relationship between humans and nature. Many Vietnamese writers such as Đoàn Giỏi, Nguyễn Minh Châu, Hoàng Phủ Ngọc Tường, Lâm Thị Mỹ Dạ, Trương Nam Hương,



Son Nam, Vu Hung, Đò Bich Thuy, Nguyen Quang Thieu, Lam Thi My Da, Xuan Quynh... have produces works about the preserving of nature. Nature is the inspiration of creation, an underground circuit throughout Vietnamese literature from past to present. In Vietnamese literature, the writers have exploited the hot issue of society in the fight to protect the environment, while opening up the reader to profound messages about the call for help of nature and the environment, to see that literature has a strong impact on the spiritual life and people's awareness of protecting and preserving the living environment.

Content

The call for help of nature in modern times

Environmental issues, standards and standard deviations in the behaviour of nature of contemporary society have posed in Vietnamese literature in a painful, urgent and impossible way that cannot be ignored. Literary criticism has also focused on the passage of literature to understand the culture of mankind, learn about human culture and the model of social development that influences or even determines how the environment and how humankind's attitude to nature and behaviour leads to environmental destruction. Vietnamese literature is associated with the deeply critical spirit of "modernity", the downside of industrial civilisation.

Looking back on Vietnamese literature since 1986, it can be seen that the development is quite abundant and open with new signs posing about natural, such as in Nguyen Quang Thieu' poetry. Drinking water to remember its source is also a good quality of modern people, but the river not only has a physical meaning, it also has a greater spiritual connotation: "The Đáy River flows through my life/ Like my mother coming home through our gate/ With heavy baskets on rice at the end of the day/ I' d rub my face on her sweat - soak back/ as cool as the river at night. " (The Đáy River - Nguyen Quang Thieu). River - Mother nature nourishes the human soul, to become a Man, you must be grateful to nature, the spiritual stream never ends. In the expansion of the topic and artistic innovation, many works have promptly reflected the face of the market economy with its prosperous and unstable instabilities. Concerns about the devastated natural environment and the national culture are permanent obsessions in contemporary Vietnamese literature, raising the issue of the relationship between people and the environment. And a bigger, more humane, global problem is the problem of human reciprocity and interaction with the environment and the natural environment. Four trends, in particular, fall into that category: rising inequalities, climate change, biodiversity loss, and the increasing amount of waste from human activity that are overwhelming processing capacities.

Vietnamese literature has explored the relationship between nature and people in a new perspective, pointing out the "destiny" of man and the "destiny" of nature through literary discourse, opposing the oppressive gaze, enslave himself course. Due to conception only reason is authoritative, I think, means I exist (Descartes. R . 1724. 33), so sometimes people allow themselves to stand in a position higher than nature, behave with nature without respect,



unaware of one's own existence depending on nature. The discourse of Vietnamese poetry from 1986 - 2020 was in favour of nature and to explain and interpret nature in relation to social life and one's own diversity: "For five, fifteen, thirty years, I've watched/ The women go down to the river for water" (The women carry the water - Nguyen Quang Thieu).

In everyday life, poets are very sensitive to the developments in their surroundings. From daily life activities with private relationships to social activities with wide relationships, the poet witnesses and is directly influenced. They are observant, sensitive and direct and have new findings in their own way. In Xuan Quynh's poems, we see that the poet does not ignore all daily happenings around with all aspects, from the image of white flood plains erasing the rain: "Love the rice fields / Being crushed with mud" (It still rains tomorrow – Xuan Quynh). The tiny creatures of nature, such as "crickets" and "dragonflies," are also cared for and poised by the poet when they have to cope with the violent storm of nature: "Love small cricket under the basement / Many years bombs and bullets wake up with lullaby", "Can't find a place to rely on /How fragile is this / Dragonfly, please tell me why the storm come / It's stormy, where are you?" (Dragonfly reports storm coming – Xuan Quynh). Xuan Quynh cherishes nature, loves life through very close and familiar images of the surrounding environment. That is the ground, the bees, the clear dawn, riverside alluvial, forest leaves ... All of these fragile, simple things of nature are associated with human life, but they do not always exist pristinely, but largely depend on human attitude.

From this respect for nature, Xuan Quynh sends a message to the people about the wonders of nature, love and protecting nature so that it will remain green, clean and clear in "The sky has returned" (Xuan Quynh). It is a view of beautiful natural ecology. The poet opens his heart to love and to protect what is small, on the margins of natural life. In Truong Dang Dung's poem, modern society has made important strides in many fields of science and technology. The market economy is based on an ideological basis called progress and fairness but in fact the values are not set up transparently, there is unethical human morality, everything is at risk and when the signals of insecurity already exist. Therefore, the constant feeling of insecurity always haunts poet Truong Dang Dung. No one else but man is the cause of the insecurity of the environment and nature: "Now I am here / when the old African forests burn / the elephants run back to Europe to freeze to death in the middle of winter / when millions of birds leave the cold land to fly to hot / exhausted land and have to plunge into the deep sea." (Write to my children - Truong Dang Dung).

The problem of environmental pollution has been becoming more serious and difficult to overcome in Vietnam as well as around the world. The cause of this situation is mainly due to human activities. The increasingly modern and developed world means increasing the pollution of the natural environment through industrial activities, burning fossil fuels, the operation of transport means, and industrial contamination caused by manufacturing processes etc. Vietnamese poetry has shown people's aspirations for good things and people's responses to insecurity. If social mobility is dominated by feelings of insecurity, it will enter a passive state,



signaling the emergence of recession. Thus, the ecological and environmental senses are expressed by poet Truong Dang Dung with poetic words and rich images: "These images most represent my view of a world of absurdity, comedy, where people dive in their livelihoods and suffering to survive as a habit" (Dung. Trương Đăng Dung 2018).

It is a sign of the notion of separation, and the "river" which becomes an obsession of human destruction of nature, the river that once witnessed, once existed with the people, suddenly is arid, lost: "I was afraid of the day when the river would stop / the soil dry, the petrified sad drops, /, / I am afraid that one day my soul will return to this world without a river" (On the hill of view). But things are not what people want, people are born with the time to experience the joys, sadness and erode everything they have before the flow of time and change, change of the ecological environment. Before that, people go back in time and are nostalgic about the natural environment. "Peace Day", "Earth Day", "World Day Against HIV", "Earth Hour" ... are man-made ways to limit the impact of the human on Mother Earth. But it also shows that natural reality has been and is being heavily destroyed by humans. Humans are facing the dangers caused by themselves day and night. The war is still going on in some countries, the number of people infected with HIV is still high, the number of people dying from Covid-19 in the world has also increased with a terrible number, and in Vietnam: "By 4:30 p.m. on August 12, 2020, Vietnam recorded 880 cases of COVID-19 (of which 355 cases were imported from abroad into Vietnam); 17 deaths. On August 12, 2020, 17 new cases were recorded as domestic infections related to the outbreak in Da Nang, including provinces and cities: Da Nang (13), Hanoi (01) and 3 new cases are isolated cases immediately after entering Hai Phong, returning from Japan on flight VN331 on August 10, 2020" (General Department of Preventive Medicine, Ministry of Health – Viet Nam).

Natural resources such as trees, water, air, etc. are constantly "eroded" and exhausted. And as time goes on, these phenomena go on according to a rule and never stop, it takes place now and unpredictably the future. It is also a serious degradation of human morality.

Thus, nature becomes an obsessive feeling, making the artist always concerned about human life, always contemplating the reality of life, and realising the "fading", the "erosion" of ecology in the process of human survival. The book of poems "picking my age is full of hands (1988) and other poems by Lam Thi My Da, the post-war period also has its own direction of exploration, full of anxiety, concerns, and sometimes panic, disappointment, But with this journey, Lam Thi My Da was successful in expressing urgent problems of her private life with her living environment in a strange poetic voice with many layered structures, many associations and profound thoughts. Night's dream is also sublimated, compatible, an intersection between man and nature: "Fly over, fly through thousands of nights / Fly over, fly over a thousand stars with glowing leaves legend / hand-shaped flowers, lullabies, lullabies, lullabies, lullabies" (To give a dream - Lâm Thị Mỹ Dạ). Thorber, an ecology critic at Harvard University, asserted that while East Asia's stereotypical is love of nature, for now:

East Asia is already home to a number of problems and crises, the most difficult environment in the world (Karen Thromber 2019).

The more modern the society, the more science and technology develop, and the more severely damaged nature is. People exploit nature to serve their own needs, making it gradually lose its equilibrium position. Considering the ecological environment, on the one hand, it affirms that the writer is a child raised from the tradition of the homeland, on the other hand, it acknowledges the depth of thought of the writers. And so, with concerns about natural life, Vietnamese writers and poets touched the nature of literature. The belief in the human being, the belief in the cultural values of the nation and humanity, makes their poetry have a unique appearance, establishing its own position among the world's literary lines.

The calls for preserving nature, nature saves the human soul

The environment is a common problem of humankind and needs the help of everyone to preserve and save human living space. Every human being, born and growing up, is attached to a certain region, an anchoring place, a spiritual wharf, but to writers, it is a familiar homeland. It is not only a title, a region, but also a place to keep precious spiritual values that they have spent their whole lives discovering and searching for with the desire to preserve it for the next generation. Opening the page of the book of female poets, it can be seen that humans and nature are in harmony and mutually transform into another space full of dreams and magic: "Who is the boy/ He is me / Who is the bird / The bird is me / Who is the dream / a dream is me" (Give a dream - Lam Thi My Da).

The dream of dissolving happiness and sadness is man's desire to be in harmony with nature, with plants and birds. Ecological ethics is an issue that needs to be deeply concerned. With a writing style spread out in a free verse, worries about the change of the natural environment have been found: "Mom, why doesn't the sun burn us up anymore?" (Main street- Da Thao Phuong).

In nature, life also changes rapidly due to volcanic eruptions, forest fires, dust storms, salt dust, the decomposition processes, rotting corpses, natural plants ... etc. Air pollution and plastic waste pollution have become urgent problems for all of humanity. Are these two big questions, covering all countries, posing the problem of global warming, the problem of the destruction of the environment and the urgency of human beings to keep it? Because when the sun loses its function of light, heating all its species means life will disappear. So how do people face this situation, is there any solution to change or reduce? The verse poses an unanswered question with profound intentions. The poet aims to pose an urgent problem in modern life and calls on people to join hands to protect the environment and listen to the voice of nature. Le Khanh Mai has revived life with candle shaped flames - an ancient and most dreamy ancient part of nature: "Although I die many times, I cannot remember the candles of reincarnated fire and light the thirst for the soul of the river" (Depression Perfume River - Le Khanh Mai). So



here, nature saved nature, fire saved the thirst of the soul of the river, a very new symbolic way of speaking.

The poet has predicted a popular phenomenon today, that there will come a time when people will not only wear a face mask when they go to trash, but the face mask will become a popular image, into a typical symbol. Covid 19, for people to betray the environment: "Without brocade, woman walks at night / green mask covering dimples / leafy eyes does not stinging the wind / but her gaze looks like the whole night" (Garbage collector - Le Khanh Mai). The global Covid 19 pandemic in the year of 2020 is a testament to that, the mask becomes the indomitable human object, the symbol of the Covid 19 era, to protect people from infectious diseases. That is the heartbreaking warning of nature, all human destructive actions against nature will be answered by nature itself. The acts of intimacy and affection that show people's emotions such as close contact, shaking hands, embracing ... etc, now become contagious disease actions. That is the most pain that all humanity is paying for what it causes to the environment.

The evidence is that thousands of industrial factories, fuel burning, vehicle operations, industrial pollution caused by manufacturing processes have to be shut down or closed for a long time because of the Covid 19. People globally have to quarantine themselves, lock themselves in their own homes, and endure a series of psychological problems caused by sudden changes in life. And to solve this problem requires the cooperation of all humanity, the pandemic is still raging around the world today. It is a lesson for humans because they do not know how to listen to nature. Only nature can save a person's spiritual life. Living in a close relationship with the motherland, loving her homeland like a son's love for her mother enables the writer to incarnate in nature, feel it, write about it as if writing about himself. That is what makes nature, the morning space in Ton Nu Thu Thuy's poetry full of atmosphere when fresh in the morning: "Early tomorrow, bright white flowers look up. A little whiter sky / Bird's wing with sky soaring / A source of sunshine pouring in endless warmth. Is the sky telling itself to be greener" (Outside the door - Ton Nu Thu Thuy).

Air, soil and water are three important elements of nature and are all seriously polluted by plastic waste, which has become an urgent problem for all mankind. Air pollution causes premature deaths in about 4.2 million people, according to the World Health Organization (WHO) in the world in 2016 (Global air pollution 2019). In which, 91% of the rate belongs to the poor and populous countries in Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific. Accordingly, air pollution is the fourth highest cause of death in the world, second only to high blood pressure, malnutrition and smoking. Therefore, the author urges each human destiny to listen to nature, because the land and water are the places where people are born, grow, grow up and return when they die. The country is also the homeland, the fatherland, the father. First: "The Country is the place where our people are reunited / The Land is the Bird's return / The Water is the Dragon's place/ Lac Long Quan and Au Co / Born to our people in an egg sac" (Country - Nguyen Khoa Diem).

People are "reborn" from the earth to receive many deep blessings in life. That is the ecological culture, showing the relationship between man and the land that the poet has recognised from his own reality: "My love smells like honey, thorn grass / Green grass, reborn from the mud, and the first kiss of my life is pure, ecstatic / Scent of copper has reborn me "(I am born of mud - Le Khanh Mai). And through literature, the poet helps people plant more spiritual trees, moral trees to deal with the environment. We can see that studying literature from the text itself in relation to cultural values raises literary moral criticism to a broad, human value. Because of human literature, the ultimate goal is for people to better understand themselves and others (Hue Hoang Thi, Nguyen Nguyen Hoang 2020. 63-72. 67).

Vietnam has always suffered heavy consequences caused by natural disasters and this year the world is considered a record year of natural disasters and epidemics due to the number of deaths and diseases. Nature is a great friend, a great mother who communicates, empowers and nurtures the human spirit. The discord between man and nature is the source of social and psychological diseases whose consequences are immeasurable. The natural ecological balance will lead to mental and social ecological balance. It can be seen that in traditional literature all write about nature under the light of "central humanity", borrowing nature to express the human heart, so a close look at animals and the world of flowers becomes a cohesive, tolerant image. Relationship with nature is a correlation and compatibility relationship with which nature is the main and standard norm.

The ecological sense in contemporary Vietnamese poetry has a need to resonate with this ecological content, not only the interaction, but also the compatibility with nature, by enhancing the cultural ecology. This is considered the third stage with more and more profound ecological discourses, cultural depth and modern moral spirit. In contemporary poetry, nature is not only a place of hope, but it also integrates into human spiritual life, is a part of human life. Vietnamese often believe in the miracle of rivers, streams, the sky, where many noble things are deposited, including love: "Then all back to silence / The silence of the new moon and green leaves" (No title - Lam Thi My Da); "If I draw the kiss in the sun / I will draw the kiss like leaves" (Like leaves - Lam Thi My Da).

In the opinion of the Vietnamese, heaven is the heart of the universe, a place to communicate with people with supernatural forces. If they say their prayers to heaven, the sacredness will be thousands of times higher than in other places. That is life, it is the beautiful things that people are bestowed by nature, the dream of beautifying the life of construction and renovation of nature is man's eternal aspiration. It is a tragedy that people are rejected by their surroundings, animals living on land have to learn to swim underwater, but cannot find a place to live: "I am a golden ant / swim in blue silk, find a way to the sea / follow the red silk to Hoang Lien" (Map - Nguyen Ngoc Tu). Leaves, sky, love, ants, human existence ... full of metaphors, ringing a bell about human perception and behaviour towards nature, a reflection of demand and consciousness inevitable of the time when people are suffering from the anger and response of



nature.

The Vietnamese people will not forget the catastrophe of seriously polluted sea water. Factories in Vung Ang economic zone released toxic waste in 2016, in Ky Trinh ward, Ky Anh, Ha Tinh. This makes Vietnam the most damaged country in terms of environmental pollution, in 2017 (Formosa Ha Tinh 2017).

If poets before 1986 were often mainly interested in the relationship between man and nature, then female poets after 1986 were interested in the relationship between man and man and nature. That is, in terms of perception, the ecological problem has changed from natural bio-waste to human ecology. Theorists see this period as another stage of technocratic civilisation in order to progress to the establishment of a new relationship of relations. In that, inter-subjectivity and inter-dialogue are one of the foundations of aesthetic philosophy. It can be seen as the post-structured view of environmental ecology in poetry. Le Thi May sees a natural ecological relationship that can be created: "Every morning leaves / Gives birth to two people / And the earth is young / In eternal love" (Love - Le Thi May). This is a natural ecological look with a new ethical and philosophical sense of a modern woman: the naturalist's shaping and understanding of ecological holism that connects human and natural studies that imbues the term naturalist with its most crucial aspect for sustainability thinking. It is this definition that is most crucial to sustainability discourse (Craig Thomas and David Pijawka. 221–242).

Building on this definition, we briefly explore literature in the fields of Literary Naturalism and Environmental Humanities to differentiate these terms and approaches. It can be seen that contemporary Vietnamese poetry has helped people to fully understand the value of the environment, and to realise one thing, every human being is reborn from nature, to receive many deep and profound gifts of nature, that is ecological culture, human behaviour to the environment. Writing on the relationship between literature, nature and the environment, there are many works asserting that exploring our relationship to nature and the role literature can play in shaping a culture responsive to environmental realities (Lorraine Anderson Scott 1999 15). Since the poet is aware of nature as a structural part of human life and: Life is a constant repetition. It means a repetition of the self of life and of those who have lived (Heidegger.M. 2004 271).

The messages of defending nature in poetry are an urgent reiteration of the endangered state of nature. Those messages will pass from life to life, like a truth about life. As of 16h30 on 12/8/2020, the world had over 266,248 new cases and over 6,756 deaths. The number of deaths due to the epidemic showed that the devastating natural effects caused by man have become unbearable. This is truly a catastrophic period of epidemics and natural disasters of mankind.

It can be seen that contemporary Vietnamese poetry has helped people to fully understand the value of the environment, and to realise one thing, every human being is reborn from nature, to receive many deep and profound gifts of nature, that is ecological culture, human behavior



to the environment. From here, it is confirmed that literature is one of the channels with great impact and has a global effect on humanity in protecting the environment together. The central theme of World Environment Day 2020 selected by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) is "Action for Nature" (Time for Nature). According to UNEP, this year is an important year for countries to commit to preserving nature and biodiversity with increasing measures and activities to restore degraded ecosystems, to respond to climate change, enhance food security, protect water resources, and now is the time, each nation joins hands and takes concrete, practical actions for our nature and the earth.

Conclusions

Natural pollution in the environment is a global problem. Solving this problem requires the cooperation of all mankind, the contribution of many means and fields, in which, undeniably is the important role of literature. Poets have pondered and pondered about global and contemporary issues. Contemporary Vietnamese poetry created a natural ecological sense with a strong message about the natural ecology, the human ecology, and the lofty cultural ecology in the poetry of this period. It reminds us that humans are not the owners of nature, they stand out from nature, human is one with nature. A human is not the centre, but the earth is the centre, human is a small link in the ecology of the universe.

This causes people and literature to change their view of the world. An ecological literary work does not merely describe nature or an ecosystem, but more importantly, it must have full ecological thought and ecological perspective. Literature must explain the cause and danger of destruction to nature in order to strengthen human responsibility and morality towards nature. The messages of protecting nature in contemporary Vietnamese poetry is shown in literature as a warning of the twenty-first century, a century when people have to face many catastrophes, epidemics, the devastated natural environment ... etc. The social reality and epidemic Covid 19 have proved that.

By the method of textual survey, the research results clearly show the message of protecting nature through the concerns and thoughts of the poets about urgent issues of the time such as the destruction of nature, the transformation of the ecological environment, warning people about the risk of environmental depletion ... From there, it reminds people and is a call on people to take specific and practical actions, possible methods and solutions to solve urgent issues related to nature, protection of nature and the earth. In addition, with the writer's understanding and sensitivity, it is completely possible to forecast disasters, warn about ecological risks, draw people closer to nature and be more responsible to the Common Mother - Mother Nature.

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