

DOCTORAL THESIS IN BRIEF

LE THI THANH XUAN. *Vietnamese Women's Short Stories in the Period 2000-2015 from the Perspective of Feminist Literary Criticism*

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Feminism has appeared for a long time in social life and literature. The struggle for women's equality and new status was first summarized by feminists into a feminist theory, later called feminism. The thesis "Vietnamese Women's Short Stories in the Period 2000-2015 from the Perspective of Feminist Literary Criticism", based on Western feminist literary criticism, analyzes Vietnamese short stories by women writers on feminism to learn the specific characteristics of Vietnamese psychology and culture through characters and literary discourses. The 2000-2015 timeline was chosen because, in the first 15 years of the 21st century, Vietnamese short stories by women writers have made outstanding contributions to promoting the country's literature in the process of "reform", including renewing the image of female characters from a modern and contemporary perspective and the perspective of feminist literary criticism.

Apart from the Introduction, Conclusion, References, and Chapter 1 providing a literature review, the main content of the thesis is presented from Chapters 2 to 4.

Chapter 2: Feminist theory, feminist literary criticism and feminist consciousness in Vietnamese literature

Feminist theory is recognized as awareness to limit oppression, exploitation, and

abuse of women in work, social life as well as family life; towards a complete end to patriarchal domination, oppression, and exploitation of women's sexual and reproductive health; to fight for women's right to devote, work and be treated equally with men in work and society.

Feminist literary criticism is understood as in-depth analysis, referring to all aspects of structure, content, talent, and style of each female author in each specific period through their "feminine writing style" - often written based on all thoughts, feelings, and emotions of women, including all aspects of life such as marriage, family, economy, law, social institutions, etc. The fight for freedom, equality, and respect for women has always been the subject and content of feminist literary criticism, which is presented creatively and effectively.

In modern Vietnamese literature, after 1986, female writers gradually emerged and created a "new literary trend or phenomenon". Several have made deep impressions on readers both in terms of content and artistic quality such as Le Minh Khue, Vo Thi Hao, Y Ban, Pham Thi Hoai, Nguyen Thi Thu Hue, Do Hoang Dieu, etc. They have created lively works with a powerful feminist voice, personality, writing style imbued with modern traces and new "characteristics" of the times. All these factors have made the success of modern Vietnamese literature in which female characters are typical subjects in all works. Familiar themes in female short stories for the period 2000-2015 are love, marriage, and family happiness. Although the tragedy of women is mostly depicted,

it is not too tragic but is integrated with the spirit of “immortality”, the potential vitality of “beautiful women” shining in hardships. *Chapter 3: Types of female characters in Vietnamese short stories by female writers (2000-2005) from the perspective of female literary criticism*

Vietnamese short stories by female writers from 2000 to 2015 have built a diverse and colorful world of female characters, breaking all standards of beauty that have been shaped and stereotyped before.

The female character with the fight for the right to life and freedom is a significant theoretical premise, towards the liberation of women. It can be seen that compared to Y Ban and Do Hoang Dieu’s sharp styles of writing and strong “personalization” for women, Tran Thuy Mai’s female writing style shows a gentle and free, but still full of bravery, pride in the personality, and soul of Hue women. Tran Thuy Mai has deeply depicted and “analyzed” the multi-dimensional and multi-faceted inner world of female characters, thereby showing their desire to live happy and free in general and the feminist resonance in the writer’s short stories in particular.

Female characters of Y Ban and Do Hoang Dieu are similar in that they both want to find freedom in love and love with many sublime emotions that make them “commit adultery in their thoughts”. Compared to the gentle, deep, feminine styles of writing of Tran Thuy Mai, Nguyen Thi Thu Hue, and Nguyen Ngoc Tu, that of Y Ban and Do Hoang Dieu are both a bit “rebellious”, plus some magic and unconscious that make many works of these writers unique.

Female characters with motherly divinity and desire for love: In feminist literature

at the beginning of the 21st century, female divinity is highly praised in works such as *Cánh đồng bất tận* (Nguyen Ngoc Tu), *Đầy tớ mẹ xin nghỉ phép* (Thy Le), etc. Writing about “maternal instinct” and silent sacrifice for love, female writers have different styles. Nguyen Thi Thu Hue’s main characters mostly are women and girls such as those in *Hậu thiên đường*, *Cõi mê*, *Tân cảnh*, *Huyền thoại*, *Dĩ vãng*, etc. Tran Thuy Mai writes about such unfortunate women as Nguyệt the limp (*Quý trong trắng*), Vy the innocent (*Chuyện ở phố hoa xoan*), Thuy the dumb (*Am bà cô*), Ha the prostitute (*Nốt ruồi son*), Kieu Dung (*Lễ cưới bạc*)... As for Y Ban, they are beautiful female intellectuals who are disappointed, precarious, eager to yearn and burn with all their heart for love in *Cưới chợ*, *Cuộc tình Silicon*, *Gà ấp bóng*, *Người đàn bà đứng trước gương*, *Sau chớp là đông bão*, etc. Nguyen Ngoc Tu is concerned about the unsettled and stagnant life of the sincere and benevolent women in western waters like Nuong in *Cánh đồng bất tận*, the lonely woman in the *Dòng nhớ*, Miss Ut in *Cái nhìn khắc khoải*, etc. The common denominator of all female characters through this manipulation, fantasy (and possibly real life) is a burning, intense desire for a full and happy family.

Female characters with sexual instincts and the need for sexual liberation: The common point of female characters in the works of Do Hoang Dieu, Y Ban, Le Thi Hoai Nam, and Doan Le is that they suffer a poor, boring, unsatisfactory, and sometimes even stuffy with no way out sex life. Despite this, they do not despair but find ways to liberate themselves by “committing adultery in their thoughts” or even “having sex in their

dreams” (*Bóng đèn*), “having sex in their memories” (*Vu quy*)...

Female characters with ecological feelings and a sense of self-liberation: Nature is the catalyst in short stories of this period for female writers to convey wild and hidden feminist beauty. Nature always listens, understand, and protect women respectfully and lovely; in turn, these women’s love, sympathy, pain, loss, joy, and happiness are engraved deep in their souls (*Suối lạnh* - Ha Thi Cam Anh, *Đồi hoang* - Pham Thi Ngoc Lien, *Biển như tôi nhớ* - Ly Lan, etc.). Besides female characters with an ecological sense, there are also the ones with a sense of self-liberation. Feminist consciousness in this period is to indicate the aspiration of self-liberation - the core subject of feminist literary criticism (*Cây thiêng trong lưng núi* - Bui Nhu Lan, *Hơi thở của núi* - Nie Thanh Mai, *Lạc giữa lòng Mường* - Ha Ly, etc.). These short stories draw a bleak picture with the harsh and gloomy fate of mountain women who have to work hard all day like buffaloes and cows in the family, even suffer violence and live without enjoyment.

Chapter 4: The artistic style of Vietnamese short stories by female writers (2000-2015) from the perspective of feminist literary criticism

Female narrative discourses create the diversity of flexible writing styles in short stories by female writers in the period 2000-2015. For feminist literary criticism, the discourse system typically characterized by the female writing style is an important art form that fully expresses the spirit of feminism in short stories. The poetic characteristics

of short stories such as narrative form and gender-conscious discourse have created vividness and diversity in female writing. The deep empathy of female writers, the new and flexible language, and poetic and narrative elements all help the works written about women have a place in the literature. Given with narrative writing style, changes in language, tone, and system of female characters, short stories from 2000 to 2015 have formed an impressive discourse about gender and feminist spirit with characteristics of the times and full of humanity.

In short, the thesis has systematized and rationalized the issues of feminism in Vietnamese culture and literature through typical female short stories for the period 2000-2015. Gender awareness and feminist resonance in contemporary literature is an inevitable consequence of the trend of equality and democratization in society and literature that female writers have been deeply aware of and demonstrated effectively. The thesis assesses that Vietnamese short stories by female writers (2000-2015) from the perspective of feminist literary criticism have made several brilliant achievements. However, not many works are written about feminism, some even have a rather ambiguous way of writing. They are not rich in content and art form, which can not highlight the fierce struggle of women for human aspirations. The thesis was successfully defended before the Thesis Examination Council of Hue University in 2020 □

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